Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi Volume 3

source : https://www.baka-tsuki.org/project/index.php?title=Itsuka_Tenma_no_Kuro_Usagi:Volume_3

These are the novel illustrations that were included in volume 3

鏡貴也
●かがみたかや

この近況の締切って、実はあとがきより早いんだよねー。つまりここからあとがきを始めてあとがきへバトンタッチ、なんてこともできるんだけど、さてそれをする場合、どんなネタがいいのかなー。こう、上手い具合にあとがきとここを連携させるといい感じになると思うんだけど、なんというかその、まったくもってもうスペースありません！　やったね！（え!?）

イラスト：榎宮祐
カバーデザイン：渡辺宏一（2725inc.）

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5-3

いつか天魔の黒ウサギ3
神隠しの通学路

鏡貴也

ファンタジア文庫

9784829133859

ISBN978-4-8291-3385-9
C0193 ¥580E

定価：本体580円（税別）

富士見書房

いつか天魔の黒ウサギ3
神隠しの通学路

「……あなたが天魔の遣い？　私を殺しにきた？」
「君は代わりのきく人形だ。殺しても、どうにもならない」
　いつもの通学路で。紅月光と同じ顔をした男の声を聞きながら、遥は思う。大兎を、遠ざけるのだ。自分や、サイトヒメア、そして狂った世界の筋書きから、少しでも――大好きな彼を遠ざけるのだ。
　一方、大兎はヒメアと共に《天魔》に追われていた。
《天魔》は告げる。「世界を異常しくする《最古の魔女》を殺す」と。
反撃の手がかりを求めて、大兎は月光のもとを目指すのだが……!?
　大切なものを守る力を渇望する、学園リバース・ファンタジー。

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恋した瞬間から、もう答えは出ている。
彼を、少しでも自分から遠ざけるのだ。
この狂った世界の筋書きから、
サイトヒメアから、
天魔から、

——大好きな大兎（たいと）を遠ざけるのだ——

いつか天魔の黒ウサギ

3 神隠しの通学路

「俺と闘るつもりか？」

「私は大兎以外には
優しくするつもりは
ないんだけれど？」

ヒメアは魔力を込めた
円陣を描き始めた。

「やっぱこれ、効くんじゃん？」
笑みを浮かべた大兎（たいと）の右腕には、
白い炎が燃え続けている。

《天魔》は告げた。
《世界を異常しくする狂った《最古の魔女(ラミエル・リリス)》を殺すための方法を、お前に教えにきた》と。

「俺は、ヒメアを救う」
《犠者》鉄大兎・15分間に7回
TATSUTO・OGATA

『最後の刻を共にする相手は、自分で選びたいの』
《最古の魔術師》サイトヒメア
SAITO・HIMEA

これまでの物語

宮阪高校1年、鉄大兎。9年前、人ならざる存在であるサイトヒメアと契約し、『15分間に7回殺されないと死なない体』になった彼は、非日常の世界に巻き込まれていく。
そんな中、ヒメアを狙い宮阪高校に謎の“悪魔”が現れる。撃退する方法を捜し、奔走する大兎とヒメア。その頃、紅月光は《天魔》と名乗る存在と邂逅していた——。

Prologue: The Usual School Road[1] ---

I fell in love.

Whenever I think of him, my chest will hurt.

It hurts so much that I thought I might die.

And when did I actually notice myself falling in love, I wonder?

I pondered a little.

But it was so long ago that I can't recall.

I moved in next to his house.

Before I knew it.

Really, before I knew it, my eyes were always seeking him.

"....."

Of course, I understood.

I understood that I must not let that happen.

However, even so, it seems like I just can't control my feelings the way I wanted them to be.

That, was why she sighed.

She let out a small, lonely sigh.

"..... aaa~hh."

After uttering that, Shigure Haruka parted her lovely lips and let out a small breath.

With beautiful medium-length black hair, and large, black eyes. Wearing a checkered pleated skirt and the sailor uniform of Miyasaka High.

Even though she looked like a normal high school girl, the truth is, she did have some traits that were a little different from a normal high school girl.

For example, periodic amnesia.

No, perhaps, it would be more apt to say that she would forget the truth.

She would forget the truth of why she was born, and for what reason she was existing.

The reason was so that the one she was observing would not realize that she was the observer.

So that her childhood friend, Kurogane Taito, who was living in the neighboring house, would not realize that she was the observer[2].

Having played with him all this while.

Having laughed with him all this while.

So that the person whom she had fallen for without her own realization, would not realize that she was a human born for the sake of observing him.

"....."

That was why, most of the time, even she herself, thought that there was nothing unusual about herself and she was merely a normal high school girl.

Because she did not have those memories.

Because she did not have those memories about the truth, she had fallen for her innocent childhood friend

Taito, experienced only joy when she was with him, and since the age of twelve, like any ordinary girl, she would only dream of becoming his bride.

A normal girl.

"....."

But yet, all of a sudden, she would remember.

Whenever her master who had created her had the need, all of a sudden, she would remember.

--- you are the observer.

--- you are an observer born for the sole purpose of observing Kurogane Taito, whose body is hiding the power of **<< *Ramiel Lilith* *Most Ancient Witch* >>**.

--- carry out your mission properly.

When she remembered that all of a sudden, *aah*, she thought.

Aah, that's how it is, she thought.

That's why my chest hurts so much, she thought.

Falling in love with the person whom I shouldn't fall in love with, and continuing to betray him every single day.

The truth was, a few minutes ago, she would have felt sheer joy if he had just smiled at her, but yet, right now, she felt that she did not deserve his smile.

That was the worst kind of feeling.

Whenever she thought about her guilt towards Taito, and,

"....."

And what a filthy human she was, she felt like puking.

When there was no one around, she would cry and yell in agony, *why was I born like this*.

Why.

"..... why was I made to fall in love with a person....."

She murmured softly.

And then she pressed her hand on top of her sailor uniform, against her chest. She pressed strongly.

"I..... I don't want to be in so much pain."

She murmured.

With a face on the verge of crying, she looked up at the sky. In a vexed way, the sky was clear and bright. Looking at that, she tried to smooth her feelings with a smile. However, whenever her memories came back, it was a tad difficult to do that.

Sadly, she was really just a normal girl.

A normal girl who was unable to control her own feelings.

That's why.

That's why whenever her memories returned to her, she would always feel like crying.

"....."

At that moment, suddenly, she caught sight of a swelling blob of darkness.

On the school road.

On the narrow school road which seemed to bound the huge mansion that existed between her house and Miyasaka High as it ran along its fence.

Above the fence was a swelling blob of darkness and out of the darkness, came a young man.

A young man who was about her age, around fifteen, sixteen years of age.

A young man who possessed jet black hair and emotionless, piercing eyes.

Haruka looked up at his face. She had seen that face before. The young man before him, had exactly the same face as the student council president of her school.

However.

"....."

She was also aware that he was not the same person as Kurenai Gekkou, the student council president of Miyasaka High.

That was why she looked up at him and said.

"..... are you a servant of the Tenma?"

The young man then looked down at her with his cold, emotionless eyes and said.

"So, it seems."

Just like his face, his voice was cold.

Looking up at him, she asked.

"..... did you come here to kill me?"

"No."

"No?"

"No."

"Then."

Haruka said.

"Then, what do you want with me?"

The young man replied. Staring at her,

"I came to give you a warning."

"Warning?"

"Yeah."

"What kind of warning?"

As she asked, he dropped down from the fence. With a face that resembled that of Kurenai Gekkou, the black crow of the Tenma dropped down from the fence.

And without saying anything, he looked behind her. As if he was looking at Miyasaka High itself, he looked into the distance.

And then.

"..... don't get too close to my big brother."

He said.

On hearing that, Haruka smiled slightly.

"Your big brother, you mean Gekkou-kun?"

"....."

"You certainly look alike."

"....."

"You guys must be on good terms right?"

"....."

"But, I probably can't do as you wish. I'm sorry."

The young man looked at her again,

"..... pitiful girl."

He said.

Those eyes were really devoid of emotion. Those eyes that were overflowing with a deep darkness and sadness were devoid of emotion.

But, looking intently at those dark eyes, Haruka said.

"..... then, will you kill me?"

But he shook his head.

"It's pointless to kill you. You are a replaceable puppet. If I kill you, the monsters on the other side of the moon will just give birth to a new observer right?"

"Yeah."

"Then, why should I kill you?"

"Ah-haha. You're right."

He was saying she was not even worth killing and she gave up. Those words were too demeaning. Those words were too saddening.

That's why she laughed again, and following that,

"Then, what do you intend to do to me?"

She asked.

The enemy.

She asked the enemy who was one of the greatest threats to her master.

And with a thin smile,

"Nothing."

He said.

"No, that was a lie. I was planning to make a little use of you but..... I gave up the thought."

He said.

On hearing that, Haruka tilted her head,

"Why?"

She asked.

And with his cold eyes, he looked intently at her.

And then,

"..... if it's so painful for you to live your life right now till the point that you can make such a face, then you'll probably take revenge right? Against the trash that have made you. Against the gods on the outer side of the moon. Then. If that's the case, there's no need for me to intervene."

He said.

With that, he turned around and disappeared into the darkness.

The usual scenery of the school road returned.

She returned to her normal, ordinary life.

However, in the center of the scenery of that ordinary girl, she was crying alone.

Crying with a smiling face.

And she thought.

With a heartrending pain, she thought.

And that was due to love.

That was because of her forbidden love.

That was why, her thoughts about him were heartrending.

They were so painful that she thought that she would die.

This love, probably, would definitely not be returned.

In the real world, things could not possibly go well as that of a fairy tale, where a prince and his princess get together and live happily ever after.

Then, if that was the case.

Then, if that was the case, for what reason was she born?

If she was born just for the sake of betraying Taito, it would be too sad. *If so, for what reason was I born?*

"....."

In the instant she thought about that, the answer surfaced.

The instant she had fallen in love with him, the answer had surfaced.

In order to.

In order to keep Taito away from herself, even if it was only by a little bit.

In order to keep him away from the crazy plot of the world, even if it was only by a little bit.

From herself.

From Saitohimea.

From the Tenma.

From the things that reside on the other side of the moon.

She swore that, even if she needed to put her life on the line, she would keep the one she loved most away from ---

"....."

But, at that moment, her memories started disappearing.

The truth seemed about to leave her mind in one swift motion. She could tell. The feeling of everything important leaving her mind. The feeling of necessary information getting put to sleep.

And, as she felt that, *I don't want this*, she thought.

Since if she forgot about the truth, and when it came back to her, she would be sunk into a deeper despair.

Whenever she remembered, her wounds would become so deep that she would feel like screaming in agony over and over again.

That's why I.

I ---.

"....."

But, at that moment, Haruka's black, downcast eyes opened wide. And she looked around her,

"Hey, what am I doing in such a place?"

She tilted her head.

Following that, she touched her own cheeks,

"Uwaah, what's this what's this. I'm crying?"

She frantically took out a handkerchief from her bag and wiped away her tears. If someone from the neighborhood were to see her crying on the roadside by herself, it would become problematic, so she urgently wiped away her tears.

Following that, she looked at her surroundings once more. To ascertain that no one was there.

And then, she breathed out a sigh of relief.

"....."

Occasionally, such things did happen. Without her realization, she would end up in a place she did not know, and her memories up till then would be missing.

What on earth was she doing? Why on earth was she here? All those memories would be missing.

Her mother had been worried about that, and in her first year in middle school, she had taken her to see a doctor, but the truth was this kind of thing only happened occasionally, and after undergoing various checks, she was deemed to be extremely healthy, and somehow, the matter was brought to a close.

The doctor had said that perhaps it was one of those puberty issues where the child had a sudden impulse to play a prank, but, her mother had then retorted angrily that her daughter was not one who would tell a lie and that was it.

But, still,

"..... it's a little scary to have a sudden amnesia."

And she looked around her. And she tried recalling how she had ended up here.

As she recalled, the school had an emergency evacuation drill and the students were allowed to be dismissed early. And then, *I don't see Taito around*, she thought as she came out of the school, and she left together with Akane and Yuki, and following that, *bye, see you tomorrow*, she had waved to them and parted ways.

"..... huh, I can't remember anything after we parted ways."

She murmured as she raised an eyebrow to make a troubled expression. And then,

"Uhn. Should I go for another check-up at the hospital? "

While saying that, she started walking.

Today's weather was bright and clear, without a single cloud.

When she saw this morning's weather forecast, *today's weather will be clear and is the perfect day for laundry*, the weather lady had said, and then, *well, won't it be nice to have bento with Taito at the veranda of the classroom*, she had

thought, and with that, she really got into it while she was making the bento, however.

"..... somehow today..... things aren't really going too well."

She murmured with a slight tinge of sadness, and smiled.

And then, a few minutes after that.

She disappeared.

Chapter 1 - The Sun Returns

The other students had all gone home, and no one else was in the school.

All the lights were gone as well, and the classroom was terribly dark.

To be suddenly alone with a pretty, mixed-blood transfer student in that dark school --- a normal, healthy high school male in such a situation would no doubt feel nervous about it, he thought.

On top of that, a while ago, that pretty girl had confessed to him and even went as far as to kiss him.

And it was his first kiss as well.

Hey, it's my first kiss.

Doesn't it mean that?

Doesn't this kind of development mean that?

Eeh seriously, at last, even I have progressed to such a stage ?

Even though,

"....."

Even though, Kurogane Taito did not really have the leisure of time to think about such things.

Just a while ago, he had clasped the hand of the pretty girl who had kissed him, and had jumped out of a dark classroom.

And they were running along the corridor in desperation.

They were running along a light-less, pitch-dark corridor.

It was not even three in the afternoon, but yet, the sky outside were covered with thick clouds, cutting off all sources of sunlight.

In place of that, a red moon had risen.

A moon of a sinister red.

On top of that, blood-red rain, which could kill a person who comes into contact with it, was falling in the

schoolyard, thus making this an incomprehensible situation which was clearly no longer a love scene between a guy and a girl.

This was not an occasion to celebrate and go, *yay, I got my first kiss.*

Isn't this like a horror film? A horror film right? And speaking of a setting in a horror film, won't the guy accompanying the girl get killed off first?

And thus, hand in hand with a girl, he was making his escape. And on top of that, *I love you*, she had said to him, and, *I love you too*, he had said back to her, and furthermore, he had have his first kiss.

And while running such thoughts in his mind, Taito ran.

And from behind him, *kachi kachi, kachi kachi kachi*, strange insect-like sounds could be heard, and little by little, those sounds were getting closer.

But he did not look back.

Rather, he must not look back.

The reason was because, if an ordinary human being set his eyes on that monster, his existence would be erased completely.

Just by looking, his existence would be erased, it seemed.

"....."

No no, how can I fight such a monster that seemed to even defy the common sense of a B-class horror film?

He had wanted to retort, but instead let it go for now. Right now, somehow, he had to escape, escape, escape, escape; somehow, he needed to escape from this idiotic situation to the student council room where a capable fellow was.

The reason was because he had made a promise.

He had made a promise to the girl whom he was pulling along, that he would definitely save her from such a crappy situation.

"....."

At that moment, Taito took a look at the girl he was pulling along.

Right there, was a girl who had an unworldly beauty --- the truth was, she was in fact not a girl of this world.

Wearing a red pleated skirt, and the sailor uniform of Miyasaka High. With lavender-colored hair glittering in a prism of seven colors despite the lack of light; definitely not the hair of any ordinary human. Porcelain white skin. Pink lips and deep crimson eyes.

He looked into her eyes. He looked into her eyes which would usually be embedded with a strong will, blended with a twinkle of mischief.

But right now, those eyes were filled with sadness. Without the usual strong will, the eyes had a troubled look.

Looking intently at those eyes,

"Himea."

Taito called her name.

"Are you properly following along?"

He asked.

On hearing that, a slight look of incredulity appeared on her face, and it was followed by a slight smile,

"Yeah. I'm right here."

She replied.

But, even so, he adjusted his hand and clasped her hand again. He squeezed it strongly. He did that because , if not so, she might end up disappearing from his sight again, it seemed. If he did not clasp her hand tightly like this, she would just disappear from his sight, it seemed.

"....."

No, in fact, just a while ago, Himea did almost disappear right before Taito's eyes. Just like nine years ago, without telling him anything, she had almost disappeared.

In order to bring Taito back to life, she had lost her power.

And because of that, the monster that was after them appeared. In order to devour the weakened Himea, this monster called the **Tenma** had appeared.

Well, while details with regards to what the Tenma was, and why it was assaulting Himea, were not fully explained to him and thus he was not too clear about them for now.

But, there were also things that he understood.

Rather, in this situation, there was only one thing he needed to know.

And that is Himea had lost her power because of me.

No, the point was, even while she was aware that losing her power would lead to her demise, she was still fine with it.

Even this time, for the sake of an idiotic guy who had forgotten about her for the past nine years and had practically abandoned her, she was still willing to go as far as to throwing her life away.

How could he.

"....."

How could he answer to those feelings of hers?

Quite frankly, the idiotic, powerless him, with not a single shred of experience in love, and who was merely an ordinary high school student until quite recently, had no clue.

But, even so, at the very least, he knew that he could no longer leave her alone.

Since she was ready to shoulder everything by herself and disappear. Since she was about to disappear to a place unknown to Taito.

That was why he clasped her hand tightly and ran.

Running along the dark corridor.

After passing this corridor, he would reach the student council room. And in the student council room, that fellow would be there.

Going by the name of Kurenai Gekkou, the high and mighty student council president would be there.

A rampaging fellow with a bad personality, who ranked number one on his list of people he did not want to own a debt to, but, at least, he should know more about this anomaly. At the very least, he should know much more than Taito himself.

That was why, with his help, they would somehow get out of this horror-like situation.

Rather, in that student council room, should lie a feature that should be able to do just that. It was a place that should be able to open a way to connect to any world and dimension.

If they could pass through that.

"....."

If they could pass through a rift, they should be able to get away from the crazy school where an abnormal monster was strutting around ---

And at that moment, the sounds could be heard again.

Kachi kachi kachi, kachi kachi, the sounds of the monster, which could send shivers running up the spine, could be heard. And they were already right behind him. Right behind him.

And then.

"....."

And then, he felt something touch his left calf. But what that was, he did not know. Since he could not see, he did not know what that was.

But, he knew that just from that touch, a portion of his left calf had disappeared into oblivion. All of a sudden, as he lost the ability to apply any strength into his left leg , he almost tumbled onto the ground.

On seeing that,

"Taito!?"

Shouted Himea.

"It's really futile..... it has already caught....."

But,

"Quiet! It'll be fine! Just a bit more, just a bit more!"

Yelled Taito. And he clasped her hand tighter. Pulling her along. So that he would not lose her. So that she wouldn't go somewhere else far away from him.

He could already see the door to the student council room. Just a little more, they would be able to escape into the student council room.

That was why, he forcibly brought his left leg forward and moved forward, enduring the excruciating pain coming from his knee above where he had felt a portion of his leg disappear, which threatened to rob his consciousness from him.

The calf which had disappeared into oblivion did not regenerate. Within a span of fifteen minutes, he had already died six times. That was why he would need to hold out for a little longer before his regenerative capabilities returned.

But still, even so, he advanced forward without paying heed. Dragging his leg, and pulling Himea along at the same time. Then, this time round, something touched his ankle, and it disappeared.

And Himea began,

"St-stop..... this is really hopeless..... just by coming into contact with the Tenma's force..... your body would disappear. Taito, let go....."

But,

"I'm not letting go!"

He yelled. With that, he clasped her hand even more firmly as he forcefully pulled her forward. And almost in a tumbling fashion, she fell onto the corridor floor before him.

And then,

"Himea, go first!"

He yelled.

"Get to the student council room first, and call Gekkou! "

He yelled.

And she looked up at him. Taito's left leg and right arm were disappearing. As he lost his balance, he fell onto the ground. As he fell onto the ground, something touched him again. It touched his right leg.

Himea's eyes widened upon seeing that. And then,

"W-wait! I won't resist! I'll let you violate me, so don't erase Taito!"

She hollered. She hollered to the **Tenma** monster that was touching Taito.

But, as if to drown out her voice, Taito screamed.

"Don't shit with me! I won't, I won't hand over Himea! Hey, damn you, Gekkou, what the hell are you doing! You should be able to hear my voice right! Then, come out quickly and do something about this monster! If not, if not, I'm going to put dog poop on your desk later!"

He yelled something incomprehensible. If it could reach the ears of that idiot, things might work out somehow, Taito thought.

"....."

But there was no reply. No, just a while ago, he had called Gekkou on his cellphone, but he did not pick up. Perhaps, he was no longer in the student council room.

Well, if that was the case, then it was very possible that he was going to get killed by the **Tenma** that was attacking him from behind.

But, still, even so,

"Are you there, stupid Gekkou!"

Taito hollered.

And then.

"....."

And then, before the dark corridor, *gahn*, with a loud noise, the door to the student council room opened.

And from inside.

"..... what are you going to put on whose desk again?"

After saying that, the face of the irritating student council president appeared.

Jet black hair and jet black Miyasaka High school uniform with a stand-up collar. Cold eyes, and a well-featured face that would make the girls in the school go, *wahh, kyaa*.

Hanging from his waist was something that resembled a fencing sword, and his hand rested on the hilt of the sword, as if he was ready to draw it at any time.

Chances were, he could probably understand this abnormal phenomenon that was taking place right now.

Looking up at Gekkou, a smile floated on Taito's face and he said.

"You sure take your sweet time to come out, octopus. And you didn't even pick up your phone."

On hearing that, Gekkou smiled thinly, and said.

"I've set it to reject the calls from trash."

"Don't shit with me."

"It's the truth."

"Right right, is that so? Then, regarding this situation... ..."

Cutting him off, Gekkou said.

"There's nothing that I can't deal with."

"I see, that sounds promising. Well then, do something about this."

Gekkou started walking towards him.

By the way, right now, behind Taito, there should be an incredible monster that could erase the existence of a human being who sets his eyes on it, but, Gekkou was looking straight at it.

He was looking straight at it, as if there was nothing out of the ordinary there.

On seeing that,

"Are you okay?"

He asked.

Gekkou then looked down at him,

"About what?"

"Erm, well, about looking at the monster behind me? What is it again? **Tenma**? Or something like that seems to be able to erase a human being who sets eyes on it."

But, as if to mock him, Gekkou simply shrugged,

"Because I'm not a human being."

He said.

On hearing that, Taito started,

"Huuhh? Not a human? Then what the hell are you?"

"Yeah. I'm a....."

"Wait, even if I ask, you will probably reply with *I'm a genius* or something stupid like that right? I'm already tired of hearing that, so yeah yeah. And can you please explain to me why is that the self-proclaimed impetuous Sir Genius is still alright after looking at the **Tenma**."

But Taito's words stopped there.

Gekkou had walked straight up to Taito and had raised his foot. And then he stepped on Taito's head with all his might.

And then,

"Ugh."

Taito groaned out.

After ascertaining that, Gekkou said.

"..... you're asking me who the hell am I?"

"I didn't ask you..... ow ow ow ow!"

"I'm a genius."

"Shut upppppppp."

"And also, I've already finished dealing with all the anomalies that had arisen in the school. So you slaves can relax and just attend to me."

He said.

On hearing that,

"Huh."

Taito asked in a stupefied voice.

And even with his face stepped on, he forcefully looked up, and looked at Gekkou's face,

"You have finished dealing with everything, erm, what does that mean?"

Gekkou then looked down at him.

"What language do I need to speak so that you can understand? Idiot language?"

"I'll kill you."

"The one who will die is you."

"Hey, ouchhhh!? Wait, I'll seriously die if you keep on stepping on me, I'll die, damn you, seriously..... take your foot away for a sec, hey!"

Taito started striking out at Gekkou's leg with his remaining left arm.

In response to that, Gekkou moved his leg away from Taito's face to dodge, and while he received Taito's fist with the sole of his foot, he continued.

"While you slaves were clamoring about, the matter was resolved. So stop making so much noise."

Taito then gave up on hitting Gekkou, and asked,

"Resolved, you say, but how?"

"Through a method which an idiot won't be able to understand."

"Wait, that doesn't tell me anything at all. Erm, in other words, are you saying that there is no longer a monster behind me?"

Speaking of that, he just realized that he could no longer hear the *kachi kachi kachi* insect-like sounds from behind him.

At that juncture, he realized that the corridor, which should be in pitch darkness from the blackout, had brightened up a little.

But the lights were not yet switched on. Then, what is this light?

He turned his eyes to look in the direction where the light was coming from. The source of the light was from the opened door of the student council room. Bit by bit, the light that was streaming into the corridor through the door was increasing in intensity.

Clearly, the light was not man-made.

It was light from the sun.

Taito looked intently at that.

"..... did the sky clear up?"

He asked.

But Gekkou did not reply.

"At least, answer my question, hey."

He asked again, but was completely ignored.

"....."

But, well, it's fine even if you don't answer, he thought. While he did not know what else would happen, but somehow, it seemed like the dangerous situation that was upon them earlier had blown over.

Then.

"....."

At that moment, he looked at Himea. He looked at her, who seemed to be sitting in the middle of the corridor as a result of her legs giving way.

Looking at Himea who did not die as a sacrifice for the sake of Taito,

"Then, well, whatever for now."

He said in a somewhat tired voice.

Himea then noticed Taito's gaze on her. She looked back at him, and then,

"..... I'm really."

She said.

"I'm really still alive....."

She said in a tone of surprise.

Following that, her eyes started to blur. Tears seemed to be welling up. While Taito wanted to go wipe those tears away, because of his missing legs and arm, much to his regret, he could not move.

That was why he flashed a smile at her. Flashing a cheerful smile as best as he could, *see, you didn't die, wasn't it great to have come along with me?*, he wanted to say.

That's why, don't do that anymore. Don't shoulder everything by yourself and go dying on your own, he wanted to say.

But before that.

"Once again, I've saved you guys. That makes it your second debt. Be grateful to me for this humongous debt which you could never hope to repay for the whole of your lifetime."

Gekkou said.

In response, Taito looked at the high and mighty guy in amazement.

"Erm..... well, whatever. Since we just had a ultra pressurizing situation, I'm fine with showing a leisurely brush-off kind of adult like response to that idiotic declaration of yours..... but, you know? I, say I, was about to say something cool....."

But, completely ignoring him, Gekkou turned on his heel. And started going back into the student council room. Looking at his leaving back,

"Hey, are you listening?"

Taito said.

However, without answering, Gekkou went back into the student council room.

Without explaining a single important thing, such as how on earth did he deal with the **<< Tenma >>**, and how safe the school was right now, he left.

Dumbstruck at his leaving figure, Taito said.

"I really want to hit him real hard one time."

On hearing that, *ah-haha*, Himea laughed. She laughed cheerfully, with a beaming face.

Seeing that the earlier fear and anxiety had left her current smiling face, Taito felt relieved.

Seeing that her earlier anxiety in the face of death had left her somewhat, Taito breathed out a sigh of relief.

And he asked.

"Say, Himea."

"Uhn?"

"I'm a little clueless about the situation, but about the monster **<< Tenma >>**."

And Himea replied.

"It disappeared."

"Why?"

But she shook her head.

"I don't know. That's why I was surprised. But, really, I can't feel their presence anymore....."

On saying that, she looked behind Taito. She turned her sight in the direction from where the *kachi kachi* sounding monster had been chasing them.

At the same time, he could feel his regenerative ability returning. Fifteen minutes had gone by since his first death. The arm and legs he had lost started regenerating. His legs came back first, allowing him to stand up. Following that, his arm came back, and after flexing that hand a little.

"Alright."

He murmured softly.

However, during that, she continued staring absentmindedly behind him.

She stared in the direction where the **<< Tenma >>** should have been pressing on them.

And she said.

"..... awesome."

She said.

On hearing that,

"What's awesome?"

Asked Taito.

And she looked at him.

"It happened like what Taito had said."

She said.

"There should not be any power existing in this world that can exorcise the **<< Tenma >>**, but yet..... just by following along Taito, the **<< Tenma >>** really went away."

She said.

And then,

"Is it really awesome to be able to shake off the **<< Tenma >>**?"

He asked.

And she nodded. With a serious expression on her face , she nodded.

"Well, when you told me to run away with you, I thought we would be continuing to run until we die. I thought we would be running for eternity. I thought we would be running until the day when the world ends, while the **<< Poison >>** spreads across the world from the continuous ravaging of the **<< Tenma >>**. But, to think that the **<< Tenma >>** would be exorcised....."

On saying that, she looked behind Taito again.

The corridor had already brightened considerably. As the rays of the sun streamed in, it was incomparably much brighter than before.

The intense rays shone into the school, as if to dispel the darkness inside her.

And then, Taito said.

"..... if it's really so awesome..... ah ~, when Gekkou talked about being grateful for a debt that I can't hope to repay for the rest of my life....."

Was for real, he had wanted to say.

"Yeah. Taito is the awesome one."

Himea said.

On hearing that, Taito looked at her.

"..... is that so? I didn't really do anything though. The only thing I did was screaming out incomprehensible stuff. And besides....."

Besides, the one who had saved Himea in the end was Gekkou --- he thought. And he felt really exasperated at his own lack of power, and his lack of knowledge. He was exasperated at his own worthlessness, where he could really only do nothing but scream out incomprehensibly, while not knowing anything, if such a thing were to happen again with another monster coming to assault Himea.

But yet, to such a dorky uncool person,

"Taito."

Himea said as she looked at him intently.

"Uhn?"

"I love you very much."

She said.

She had always said that to him.

And he smiled helplessly at her. Even though he did not think that he was worthy of such words, but she was able to say that straight to him, eye to eye.

And in response,

"Ermm ~, ah ~, anyway, I will strive to live up to be a man worthy of those words."

He said.

Himea's face then turned to one of surprise, then, her usual mischievous eyes opened wide and she smiled.

"Geez, Taito sure is adorable."

She said as she smiled. She then got up to her feet, moved close to Taito, and put her small forehead against his chest.

And then,

"Even if you don't strive so hard, you have always been cool, you know."

"Really ~?"

"Yeah."

"Uh~n."

"Geez, I won't poke fun at the one I love."

After saying that, she raised her hand and flicked his brow.

However, without saying anything, Taito merely groaned slightly.

This time, things had somehow turned out fine. Even though he was totally clueless as to what had happened,

somehow, they had managed to shake off the **<< Tenma >>**.

But this kind of luck probably would not continue. Then again, nine years ago, unable to protect her, she had been taken away from him once.

After getting abducted by a monster called Hinata, she had been shut in darkness for nine long years.

And, in order not to let something like that happen again ---

I have to become stronger.

Taito thought. And also wiser.

For the sake of that.

"....."

He looked up. He looked at the student council room at the end of the corridor. And he thought of the face of the irritating fellow in that room, who was a little more knowledgeable than him with regards to the supernatural.

And then,

"Uweh ~, will I really be able to ask him to teach me about the various stuff? Seriously?"

He muttered softly and scowled.

"Huh?"

Himea then queried as her cute face looked up, and Taito shrugged his shoulders,

"No. Nothing really."

He replied.

"Anyway, let's go to the student council room for now. It won't do to not ask Gekkou how he had driven off the **<< Tenma >>**, and besides..... I need to ask him about what happened in the school during noon break earlier."

After saying that, Taito gently put his hands on Himea's shoulders and pushed her away from him. And he started walking.

Suddenly, the lights along the corridor started turning on. It seemed like everything had really been resolved, and the school was returning back to the way it was.

While Taito did nothing, Gekkou had resolved everything.

Thinking about that,

"....."

Thinking about that, his face started becoming sulky.

Initially, he was forcibly made a student council executive member by the high and mighty idiot, and following that, he was told that the student council was supposed to deal with the supernatural phenomenon happening in this school, *get rid of that giant bat as large as a helicopter flying over the schoolyard*[3], *get rid of that snake monster swimming in the wall*, and things like that which led him to think, *don't shit with me, how can a normal high school student deal with such demons and monsters*, but, now , after seeing the difference in power between him and a student of the same age and level, somehow, he did not find it amusing at all.

"..... in the first place, I really hate losing."

And he recalled the time when he did karate. He remembered when he was in grade four, he was pitted against a grade eight opponent, and of course, he lost, and he went home crying, feeling mortified.

However, for half a year, he trained hard like an idiot, and once again, he challenged that grade eight big brother, and even though it was by way of points, he won.

He was overjoyed from the win, and from then on, he was totally absorbed in karate, but all that ended after he got injured.

And ever since, he had not worked hard at anything, all the way up till his freshman year in high school ---

"..... hey, perhaps, once again, I've found something that I could work really hard at."

He murmured softly.

Though it felt really weird that the thing he found was in the capacity of a student council member --- while thinking about that, he looked at the student council

armband around his arm. Initially, he disliked wearing that armband but had to wear it since he had no choice, but,

"If working hard at this would allow me to protect Himea, then it might be kind of interesting."

He realigned his thoughts.

He would become someone capable of dealing with any kind of monster that would show up next time.

In order not to make her cry again.

He would work hard to become a powerful man that she, who had confessed to him, could be proud of.

"Duh, sounds like a protagonist in some manga....."

He made a comeback at himself, but.

"....."

For some reason, he was getting a little excited from those thoughts.

Ever since his injury, he had not found anything that he could work hard at, but yet, all of a sudden, he discovered something which he had to work real hard at.

Ahh, geez, seems bothersome, he thought, but at the same time, he was a little excited about that.

And the thing he was aiming for, was to become the strongest student council executive member, which somehow sounded somewhat nonsensical.

The strongest student council executive member, so as to speak,

"..... sounds pretty foolish....."

As he grumbled softly, he walked forward.

And as he was about to enter the student council room .

From the student council room, the face of a girl poked out.

Student council executive member by the name of Andou Mirai.

With calm eyes and a long ponytail. With a child-like face and a short stature, however one sees it, she looked like a grade seven, eight student, but yet, she was wearing the sailor uniform of Miyasaka High.

Well, if one would ask about her age, she was really fourteen years old.

And to top it off, she was not a human but a demon.

Erm, can the school really grant entry to such a fella? , he thought, but, somehow, in the student council of this crazy school, such kind of individuals were assembled.

At that moment, he looked at the pretty girl beside her.

She was not a human as well, and he, too, as a result of the **<< Black Magic Poison >>** she injected into him, had acquired a conditional immortality in which he would not die unless he was killed seven times in a span of fifteen minutes, and as such, he too was not very human-like.

And, with regards to the ruler of the student council where such inhuman-like fellows were assembled, the one who possessed an inhumanly bad personality, Kurenai Gekkou ---

Somehow, he just realized how big his goal of becoming the strongest was, in this manga-like place.

Isn't it really tough to become stronger than a demon, a ***<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>****, and the high and mighty idiot?*, Taito thought.

Mirai then looked at him,

"Oh ~, it's Mr Immortal and Hime-chan! Short time no see[4]!"

To which Taito raised his hand.

"Hi hi, morning no see[5]."

Following that, Himea smiled as well,

"Good morning, Mirai-chan."

She said.

Mirai nodded in response, and turned back to face Taito,

"But hey hey, I have a message from Gekkou for Mr Immortal ~"

"Message?"

"Yeah."

"What's that?"

"From Gekkou, ok."

"Yeah."

"I want to drink Cola, he said."

"Tell him to go to hell."

On hearing that, Mirai turned her head back to the student council room,

"Gekkou, he asked you to go to hell ~. Right. Right. Ah , erm, right. Got it."

After several times of acknowledgement, once again, she turned her head back and said.

"He said pickles suit me[6]!"

"He totally didn't get my message right!"

Taito said,

"....."

But, he gave up.

Instead of calling her a great demon that governed all Lightning, her appearance was like that of a cheery middle school student; and he looked into those big round eyes of hers,

Indra

"Ah~, well, since I'm thirsty as well, I'll just go buy some."

He replied. And following that, he turned towards Himea,

"So, since I'm going to go buy something from the vending machine, what would you like?"

As she looked perplexed and asked, *what should I get*, her face then turned into one of slight disconcert,

"Erm, I don't know. What do they sell?"

"Ah, Himea, you don't know what a vending machine is?"

"Uh-huh."

"Erm, then, why don't you come with me and check it out?"

He asked, but, somehow, she shook her head.

"I'll pass. I'm sorry Taito. I'm a little tired."

She said.

Following that, she made a slightly tired face. *Well, there're always such days, I guess, can't be helped*, he thought .

That was why he nodded,

"Alright, is it ok to have the same thing as me?"

He asked, and all of a sudden, her face beamed,

"That'd be great!"

She said.

"Alroight alroight. I'll go get the drinks, and you can go back to the student council room first."

He said.

And he turned on his heel. And started in the direction of a vending machine.

As if the anomaly that had happened earlier was a joke , silence had returned to the corridor, which was devoid of the students who had all gone back home.

As he walked along the corridor all by himself, all of a sudden, as if he had realized something, he took out his wallet from his back pocket,

"Crap. Do I have enough money to buy drinks for everyone?"

He muttered.

Chapter 2 - Jet Black and Deep Crimson

Himea gazed happily after Taito's leaving figure.

Her deep crimson eyes were relaxed, and she had a small smile on her face.

Just by looking at everything he did made her feel a sense of affection and bliss inside of her.

Just by being in the same place he was at made her feel a sense of affection and bliss inside of her.

Why do I love him so much?, she would think to herself from time to time.

Well, of course, there was a reason.

There was a reason why she had chosen him.

But, there were a number of them that could not be explained.

For example.

"....."

For example, this beating chest --- she touched the ribbon of her sailor uniform, beneath which her chest lay. Just by looking at him, this pounding would speed up a little.

And earlier, when he touched her lips.

Just by remembering her lips being touched by his finger made her face turn red.

"Ahh, jeez, what's this feeling?"

She let out a sigh.

And she thought.

What was wrong with her, for having chosen a human as her partner?

She was well aware of this thing known as a kiss since many centuries ago. She was well aware that humans engage in such an act since a long time ago.

But, she never did expect that she would actually do it and on top of that, feel the way she was feeling now.

Because she was not a human.

Vampire

A **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** was an ugly creature destined for eternal solitude.

And at that moment, Taito disappeared from her sight. He had turned around the corner and disappeared from her sight. Just that alone made her feel a tinge of loneliness.

However, after ascertaining that he was gone,

"....."

Her deep crimson eyes narrowed. And her face returned to its former look. As a dangerous smile surfaced on the face of the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** **Vampire** who had lived for a long, an excessively long period of time, she turned around.

There, stood Kurenai Gekkou, who seemed to be waiting. And beside him, stood erect a young demon girl , as if she was protecting him.

Himea looked intently at the student council president of this school and said.

"..... now. Did you purposely send Taito out of the way because you have something to say to me?"

Gekkou then shrugged his shoulders and said.

"Rather, don't you have something to report to me?"

"Ah-ha. So you want to know everything about your subordinates?"

"Of course. A slave is not entitled to any privacy."

"..... slave..... slave huh. For a human, you sure act high and mighty ~"

"Because I am."

"Ah-haha. Is that so?"

"Yeah."

"But, no matter how high and mighty you are..... aside from Taito, I have no intention of showing any kindness though?"

She then thrust out her hand. Her slender fingers pointed towards Gekkou. At the tip of her fingers, two small balls of blueish white fire appeared, and with that, she started drawing a circle infused with magical energy.

Looking at that.

"Ohh ~."

The lightning girl beside Gekkou uttered. With her calm but yet strong-willed eyes, she looked up at her master,

"Gekkou Gekkou. It seems like, somehow, Hime-chan is calling for a demon!"

She said.

"Uhn? In other words, it's a contracted demon like you ?"

"Yeah."

"So, is the demon that she's summoning out stronger than you?"

"Erm, I won't know until the demon is summoned though..... but Mirai is a super elite stronger than nearly all other demons, that's what Mama had....."

"I didn't ask about what your rotten Mama said."

"Don't talk bad about Mamaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

Mirai yelled but Gekkou ignored her and continued.

"Well, that's fine. In other words, you wanna have a go with me? Saitohimea."

He then touched his sword. And unsheathed it a little.

"....."

Himea looked intently.

At the sword at Gekkou's waist.

A slender, sharp, non-edged sword.

The pitch black blade was adorned with a bellguard that carried a curse for the purpose of killing the moon.

That sword might be bad news ~, Himea thought. Gekkou's own movements were not really a big deal by themselves. It seemed that the monster called Hinata who had attacked them recently was his little brother, but compared to Hinata, he was nothing great.

But still, the sword he was wielding.

That sword known as **Wicked Blade** (Spell Error) was a little dangerous.

However, she would summon a demon to deal with that sword, and then, if she could use her magic to restrain Mirai of Andu, the daughter of Thunder God (Indra), she should be able to manage somehow.

Even for a weakened me who has lost most of my powers,

"..... I shall not be beaten by a mere human and a second rate demon."

She said.

And even while she said that, *not that I'm really confident though.....* she thought to herself. Since she had already lost most of her powers.

Once when she conferred Taito with immortality.

And another time when she gave up her powers to defy the law of this world in bringing Taito back to life.

And because of that, she had lost most of her powers.

But she did not regret it. Because that was the extent of how important he was to her, she did not regret it.

Besides, if she deployed her tactics well, she would manage somehow. Since, as a **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer Vampire >>**, she had access to an almost unlimited variety of magic.

Just as she was about to complete her demon summoning magic; and on top of that, just as she was about to invoke four different spells in the corridor of this school.

Just as the battle was about to start ---

At that instant.

"Uwah ~"

Mirai cried out, as if she just remembered something.

Of course, Himea and Gekkou were going to ignore that and began their battle, but Mirai further went on to wave both her hands,

"Timeout timeout ~ Hime-chan, timeout ~!"

She shouted.

On hearing that, Himea became a little flustered,

"Erm, timeout, you say..... it means 'wait a minute' right?"

And Mirai nodded twice.

"Yeah yeah! Timeout!"

"Erm, what are we waiting for?"

"Erm, wait a minute ok! Since I have something to say to Gekkou."

"Something to say?"

"Yeah!"

"Well, after that, we're going to fight?"

"Yeah yeah yeah. Wait a sec."

And appearing completely defenseless, Mirai turned around readily. Leaving her back facing Himea, who was on the verge of deploying her magic.

On seeing that,

"....."

Himea raised her eyebrows, appearing troubled. As the tension built up before a fight was suddenly severed, she felt a little awkward at her raised up hand, which was on the verge of deploying her magic.

However, paying no heed to that, Mirai said.

"Hey hey hey Gekkou."

And then, with perhaps the same feelings as Himea, Gekkou looked down at Mirai with an irritated look,

"What is it?"

He said.

To that,

"Just now, didn't Gekkou say that we might need to fight Hime-chan, and if a fight starts, I am to stop Hime-chan's movements right?"

She said.

On hearing that, Gekkou's scowl deepened,

"You idiot pet..... if you say that out loud....."

But, he was interrupted by Mirai, who puffed out her chest proudly,

"I did stop her movements right ~!"

She said.

"Now's the time to do it! Didn't you say you're going to persuade her once she stopped moving! See, she's not moving!"

She said.

On hearing that, Gekkou made an exasperated expression and said,

"..... you call that stopping her movements?..... ahh, damn, I was a fool to expect this much from a brat....."

And he turned to look at Himea. With a slightly embarrassed look, Gekkou looked intently at Himea,

"..... well, the procedure may be a little messed up, but I have no intention of killing you."

He said.

However, with her finger still pointing at Gekkou, Himea said.

"..... I don't believe you."

And Gekkou nodded readily,

"I guess. That's why I was planning to spare your life only at the point when I'm on the verge of killing you --- but thanks to this idiotic pet who isn't even toilet-trained, everything's been ruined."

He said.

On hearing that, Mirai's face turned red,

"I know how to use the toilet at the very least....."

"Shut up."

Gekkou stuffed his hand over Mirai's mouth. She struggled to speak, but Himea did not concern herself with that.

Rather, it was not like Mirai, who was a demon, could not brush off the hand of a mere human, but yet, she did not. She had already been overly oppressed by Gekkou.

However, Himea kind of understood the feelings of Mirai.

A girl sometimes does have those strange moments, she thought.

"..... and that includes me."

She smiled slightly.

That was why she ignored the noisy Mirai, and looked at Gekkou. She looked intently at the human who said that he would not kill her.

She would not be deceived.

I don't intend to kill you.

I'm not interested in your power.

It's alright. We've come here to protect you.

The humans had always said that to her.

And all those words were.

"Lies..... I'm well aware that humans love to lie."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Then, it's fine to not believe me, but listen to what I have to say."

But she shook her head. She raised her hand, which was ready to deploy her magic, higher.

"..... do you think I will listen to a human who has made a deal with the **<< Tenma >>**?"

She said.

On hearing that, Gekkou's eyes narrowed further.

"....."

But he said nothing.

However, with that, she knew everything she wanted to know.

He had betrayed the world.

He had betrayed this world to the crazy monsters.

Himea laughed at that thought,

"I see. That's why the **<< Tenma >>** had gone back. And I thought it was strange. For the **<< Tenma >>** who were bent on erasing me to have withdrawn so easily....."

As she said that, she dispelled the magic circle that she had created at the tip of her finger used for summoning a demon. Following that, she started writing words of a spell from another world and murmured softly.

"=========="

She started chanting at a pitch so high that it was probably not audible for a human.

As she did that, an eyeball made up of yellow light appeared at the tip of her finger. And from the back of the eyeball, a tail appeared and pierced through her head , and then the eyeball screeched out, and flew at a blinding speed. Passing above Mirai's head and bypassing the side of Gekkou, reaching into the student council room.

And at the same time.

The visuals captured by the eyeball were transmitted into Himea's mind.

A completely destroyed classroom. A whiteboard that was split apart, a broken desk, and a floor filled with holes. An intense battle had probably taken place here.

But that was not what Himea wanted to know. What she wanted to know was, a short while ago, where had this place known as the **<< Holy Ground >>**, which could connect to any world, dimension, and space, had connected to.

Gathering her concentration, she manipulated the eye. She moved the line of sight of the eyeball to the most inner part of the student council room. And looked at the wall that was made up of white concrete. The only

unblemished place that was not subjected to the destruction from the battle.

Rather, that was the place where the enemy had probably come from. In other words, when the battle was going on, on that wall, a **<< Way >>** was opened.

Where on earth did that **<< Way >>** connect to?

Just as she was about to look into that,

"Stop. Don't touch the **<< Holy Ground >>**, Saitohimea."

Gekkou said in front of her.

Himea closed one her eyes. Her right eye looked intently at Gekkou, while she gathered her concentration at her left eye, intending to investigate the student council room.

And then,

"..... don't touch it? In the end, it's really because you have something to hide?"

A smile surfaced as she said that.

However, with a serious expression on his face, Gekkou said.

"No. This place isn't like any **<< Holy Ground >>** you know of. If someone other than the contractor tries to forcibly invade it....."

"..... then what?"

"He'll die."

"Ah-haha. You're such a bad liar. Who do you think I am? I've manipulated **<< Holy Grounds >>** many times before....."

While saying that, she commanded the eyeball to try invading into the **<< Holy Ground >>**. Indeed, normally, a **<< Holy Ground >>** would not listen to anyone else other than the contractor, but there's always a way to bypass that.....

After all, it was a newer form of magic that was created way after **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**. There was no way she could not break.....

Vampires

But, suddenly, a hole appeared at the center of the white wall. And from the center of that hole, some unidentified black thing came flying out,

"Eh?"

Himea said.

However, before she could ascertain what that was with the eyeball, the visual transmitted by the eyeball disappeared. While she did not know what had happened, the signal from the eye magic she had conjured disappeared,

"Eh? Wait....."

She said.

And then Gekkou said.

"Quickly undo your magic, Saitohimea. You'll really die, you know."

"Eh? Eh? Wait a minute..... what on earth was that....."

As she said that, she could barely hear a sound that was coming from there. *Chichichichichi*, the sound of dispersing fireworks. And it was just next to her. As if it were utilizing a tin can telephone, the *chichichi, chichichichi* black fireworks traveled along the nerve line extending from the eyeball which was supposed to be used for sending visuals to her, pressing in on her.

"What's this?"

She said. She was being pressed by a magic that was clearly different from the defensive magic used for intruder prevention which she had encountered in the past.

More importantly, she should have already disabled the barrier that was protecting the **<< Holy Ground >>**. But yet, something she could not understand had been invoked.

A spell she did not understand, a magic she did not understand.

"..... crap."

She muttered. She tried to sever the nerve line extending from the eyeball to her,

"..... hn."

However, it did not get cut. As if it were being manipulated by some other power, the nerve line moved, and was about to invade into the depths of her mind,

"Wait, this is a joke..... wait....."

Himea suppressed the nerve line with both her hands. And she looked intently at the incoming black fireworks.

And frantically, she started chanting a magic that could deal with the fireworks, and as well as reverse the manipulation of the nerve line, but ---.

At that moment.

"Fool."

Gekkou said and started running. Dashing straight towards her, with his hand holding onto the sword at his waist.

But, Himea could not move.

With her hands full from dealing with the fireworks and the nerve line, she could not move in response to that.

The fireworks closed in.

The nerve line started invading into her brain.

And on top of that, Gekkou had his sword unsheathed . A pitch black sword. That sword which exorcise all kinds of demonic forces, **Spell Error** **Wicked Blade** swung above her .

It was indeed impossible for her to deal with all that. It was necessary for her to sacrifice one of them.

At that moment, Himea's hands left the invading nerve line. She would probably be able to repair her brain later. And then she ignored the fireworks. Even though she did not know what kind of magic was contained in that fireworks, however, for most magic, if she was able to come into contact with it, with the fountain of knowledge inside of her, she was confident that she would be able to come up with an undo spell for it.

That was how great the amount of knowledge that was inside of her. Over countless years and months. Over an eternal period of time which was long enough to send anyone into despair, she had accumulated magical knowledge to such a large extent.

And for this reason, she was the source of all magic.

As the source of all magic, she was called a **<< Vampire Most Ancient Sorcerer >>**.

That was why Himea ignored the fireworks and started countering Gekkou ---

In that instant.

Gekkou swung his sword.

On seeing that, once again,

"Eh?"

She said in a dumbstruck manner.

The reason was because Gekkou had swung **Spell Error Wicked Blade** at a place which could not reach her.

And then,

"Exorcise this magic, **Spell Error Wicked Blade**."

He murmured.

As he did that, he readily severed the eyeball's nerve line that was invading into Himea's brain. But that was not all. With his bare hand, he caught hold of the black fireworks that had flown off the nerve line from the eyeball and on its way to attack Himea. Instantly, a sizzling, burning sound could be heard from his hand. Smoke formed, giving off an unpleasant smell. Even as Gekkou's face contorted in pain, he seemed determined not to release his grip on the fire.

While clenching his fist tightly,

"..... don't you eliminate this woman, **<< Holy Ground >>**. This fella is....."

The fire flared up. As if it were resisting Gekkou's words, the fire flared up and started burning Gekkou's arm. If this carried on, his whole body would be covered in flames, Himea thought. But somehow, she could not comprehend why he refused to let go of that fire.

However, without letting go,

"..... this fella is my comrade, fool."

Gekkou said.

And in that instant, the fire disappeared.

The fire disappeared in a surprisingly abrupt instant. As if it was controlled by Gekkou, it disappeared on hearing what Gekkou had said.

On seeing that,

"....."

Himea looked up at Gekkou.

For some reason, a delighted smile surfaced on Gekkou's face. And then,

"..... haha, thanks to your uselessness, unexpectedly, it had turned out to be of the same results as what I've planned in sparing your life."

He said. Following that, Gekkou pointed his sword to Himea's neck.

"Even though I can kill you..... I shall not. So believe in my words."

In response to that,

"....."

As Himea was about to say something,

"Shut up. There is no more need for you to talk."

Said Gekkou. And with that, the sword came piercing through. The pitch black sword came piercing through her neck. There was no pain. However, her legs gave way and she fell onto the ground. The sword went in deeper, deeper into her neck, came out from the other side, and pinned her to the floor.

Himea did not put up any resistance.

Since if he had intended to kill her, he would have already done so.

So, quite possibly, just as he had said, he had no intention of killing her.

If so.

"..... what on earth are you planning to use me for?"

Himea narrowed her deep crimson eyes and asked.

Gekkou replied.

"Because you're my comrade."

"Ah-ha. Do you really mean that?"

On hearing that, he laughed.

"Of course not."

"I thought so. Then, hurry up and speak. If Taito were to see me like this....."

"There's no problem. I won't accept any complaints from my slav....."

However, at that moment,

"Quiet, human. You can call me whatever you want, but I won't allow you to humiliate Taito."

On saying that, she stretched her hand out. She stretched her hand out towards Gekkou's head.

But, Gekkou said,

"Mirai."

"Roight."

"Hold down this fella's hands."

"Eh ~, but isn't this like bullying....."

"Do it quickly!"

"Ok, ok."

Mirai replied as she grabbed hold of both of Himea's hands. In a corridor of the school, her neck was pierced by the student council president with a sword, and both her hands were restrained by a demon.

But even so, Himea narrowed her eyes and glared at Gekkou,

"..... you think this will stop me? Just with my eyes alone, I can use my magic to curse you dead, you know?"

She said.

Gekkou then said,

"Hah. I've also completed my preparations to curse you dead."

As he said that, he reciprocated by twisting his sword. As he did that, the blade of the sword became even darker and blacker.

But Gekkou continued.

"But I won't kill you."

"Why? Did the **<< Tenma >>** told you to capture me alive?"

But he shook his head.

"The **<< Tenma >>** only told me that they would teach me the way to kill the **<< Witch >>**. The way to kill the mad Demon God who will turn this world into an anomaly..... the way to kill **<< Most Ancient Witch >>** (Ramiel Lilith)...."

He said.

On hearing those words,

"..... Ramiel Lilith?"

Himea queried back.

As the words she used for querying back.

As the words, Ramiel Lilith, reverberated within her.

For some reason, she felt a sharp pain coming from a deep part of her mind. For an instant, she almost lost

consciousness from that pain in the deep recesses of her mind.

She did not understand what had caused that. As it happened too quickly, she did not understand what was it that had happened inside of her. The only thing she could conjecture was that the word, Ramiel Lilith, was a spell word created by the **<< Tenma >>**.

If that was the case, it would be bad. Real bad.

Based on the pain that she had just felt, the curse had probably encroached into the deep parts of her brain. If so, she needed to counter it. Thinking that she needed to counter it quickly, frantically, she started deploying a counter curse within herself.

"Hnn."

Moaning softly, she starting deploying her magic within herself at a fast rate.

"....."

However.

For some reason, no matter how she scanned herself, she was unable to turn up any information on what type of curse had been placed on her.

That should not have been possible however.

For such a powerful curse that had inflicted such intense pain on her, whatever kind of spell it was, it should not have been possible for her not to find it.

But, no matter how she searched, she still could not find the curse.

Then.

"....."

Himea thought.

Then, really,

"What's that?"

She asked.

"What is Ramiel Lilith?"

She asked. In the instant she asked that, the pain assaulted her head again. A pain that was so strong that it made her want to scream out.

She endured it. In order to hide it from Gekkou. In order not to let it slip to her enemy on the anomaly that was occurring in her body, she desperately endured it.

And then, Gekkou looked intently at the face of the Himea who was enduring the pain desperately, and said.

"You don't know?"

"Yeah."

She replied.

"You really don't know who is **<< Most Ancient Witch Ramiel Lilith >>**?"

"Yeah."

Enduring the pain, somehow, she managed to acknowledged with a feigned, normal expression.

In response to that,

"..... I see. If that's the case, the **<< Tenma >>** would seem to have no more interest in you."

He said. With that, he withdrew his sword and returned it to its scabbard at his waist. Mirai released her hands as well.

Dumbstruck, Himea looked up at Gekkou's figure,

"..... what, is that?"

She asked.

"The **<< Tenma >>** no longer have any interest in me?"

And he nodded in response.

"Yeah."

"Liar."

"Nope."

"But, but, there's no way....."

Such a thing could happen.

Since, from a long time ago, the **<< Tenma >>** had always been the natural enemy of **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**.
Vampires

Since the beginning, the **<< Tenma >>** had always been the natural enemy of **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**.
Vampires

Before a weakened **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** who had lost his powers, the **<< Tenma >>** would gather in a pack like hyenas.
Vampire

Himea had already witnessed her comrades getting devoured by the **<< Tenma >>** many, many times.

And if the **<< Tenma >>** could devour all the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**, they would once again get back their true powers. A power that could cover the entire surface of the planet which they still lack. Getting back the power of the **<< Old Ruler >>** of this planet that would allow them to rise up into the sky. That was why, for that reason, the **<< Tenma >>** were actively devouring the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**. In order to
Vampires
Eldwui

return this world to its former chaos, the **<< Tenma >>** were actively devouring the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**.

And Himea was the last remaining **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** in this world. If she were to be devoured by the **<< Tenma >>**, they would return to their former height in powers and everything would be finished ---

"....."

That was what she had heard.

That was what she had heard tens of thousands of years ago.

But, in that vast pool of knowledge within her, the words, Ramiel Lilith, did not exist.

To top that off, to say that the **<< Tenma >>**, who were so eager to kill off the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>**, had lost interest in the life of a **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** was something she could not imagine.

What on earth.

"..... what on earth is Ramiel Lilith?"

On hearing her question,

"Who knows? I didn't ask."

Gekkou said.

On hearing that, Himea's eyes widened,

"Huh? You didn't ask? Why didn't you ask?"

"Because I'm not interested."

"Erm, no, that's not the problem right? Why aren't you interested? Isn't that something very important?"

"Like hell I care."

"Hey you....."

Just as she was about to continue, she stopped. Following that, she appeared to shiver in anger, and said to herself, *stop, stop, Himea, you can't let a mere human throw you off*, and calmed herself down. She let out a small sigh and took in a breath,

"O-ok, I got it. Then, let's hear what you have to say."

With a face that seemed to say, *finally, you're ready to listen huh, fool*, Gekkou looked down at her and said,

"Finally, trash."

A mere human dare say this to me.....

"..... hn~, ah~, uhn. Do your best, Himea."

She muttered softly to herself, and stood up. And in order to not worry Taito, who would be returning and might think that she was being bullied or something, she arranged her uniform and skirt.

And once again, she looked intently at Gekkou,

"Alright. Then, tell me what you know. Up till the point where you made a deal with the **<< Tenma >>** and drove them away, is that ok?"

But, he shook his head.

"I didn't make any deals with the **<< Tenma >>**."

"Eh? Then, how did you drive them away?"

In response,

"I didn't drive them away. Look, they are still behind you."

He said.

"Eh?"

Himea uttered as she turned around.

And there they were ---

The **<< Tenma >>**.

"Ah."

She would have utter that if she had the time. The **<< Tenma >>** swelled up as a blob of darkness and invaded her body. *Kachi kachi*, *kachi kachi kachi*, as the ear-splitting grinding noises that sounded like the biting sounds of insects rang out intensely, they forcibly invaded her body .

In response to that,

"N-no."

She said. And she tried to resist.

But it was futile.

The **<< Tenma >>** swarmed into her before her eyes, obscuring her vision. As she got swallowed by the overwhelming power, she could no longer think about anything.

I'm going to die, she thought.

I'm going to get swallowed by the ***<< Tenma >>*** *and disappear*, she thought.

She felt no fear at that as things were happening too fast. *Ah, I won't get to see Taito anymore*, just as she thought about such things, suddenly,

"....."

The **<< Tenma >>** flew out of her body. Without having done anything. Without devouring her power and erasing her existence, the **<< Tenma >>** came out of her body.

"Uwah."

She cried out. Incurring a shock from the **<< Tenma's >>** sudden exit, she fell on her backside. Her body went limp. Perhaps, her body went limp as a result of it getting taken over for an instant. But, even so, she needed to move. If the **<< Tenma >>** were here. If those monsters were here, she would need to escape.

Just a while ago, she was going to let herself get swallowed by the **<< Tenma >>**.

In order to protect Taito, she was about to let herself get swallowed by the **<< Tenma >>**, but now, the situation had changed.

Right now, she no longer knew what the **<< Tenma >>** was after.

Who was Ramiel Lilith?

Why did they no longer need the **<< Most Ancient Vampires Sorcerers >>**?

If she got swallowed under such incomprehensible circumstances, she would no longer be able to do anything after that.

Unable to prepare any countermeasures, the **<< Tenma >>** would end up moving again. The **<< Tenma >>** would move while Taito is still alive.

That would be bad. If the **<< Tenma >>** moved, a planet or two like this one would instantly change.

That was why she shook as she forcibly plant her slender legs onto the floor,

"I need to get awa....."

And then Gekkou said,

"There's no need to get away. They merely did a search inside you. The **<< Tenma >>**..... were merely checking whether you really know nothing about Ramiel Lilith."

"....."

Himea did not reply.

She did not have the leisure to reply.

She could only frantically attempt to escape from the place. She turned around and started running.

Looking at her back, Gekkou said,

"However, it seems like you really know nothing. Congratulations. From now on, the **<< Tenma >>** will no longer target you."

It's a lie, Himea thought. That couldn't be it. She couldn't believe that the **<< Tenma >>** would stop their hunt for **<< Most Ancient Sorcerers >>** (Vampires) ---

But, Gekkou said.

"Trust me, Saitohimea. If I really wanted to kill you, I would have done that long ago. But did you die?"

On hearing those words.

Himea halted. She halted her legs that were desperately trying to take her out of here. And she looked behind her.

And indeed, the **<< Tenma >>** were really no longer there. Without laying their hands on Himea's powers, the **<< Tenma >>** were gone.

And she started,

"What on earth..... what on earth are you all scheming ?"

She was aware that her current expression was one of unease.

Since she really did not understand what had actually happened. All of a sudden, the things she thought she knew all this while had its basis overturned completely.

That was what was causing her unease. A fearful unease.

However, Gekkou put on his usual irritating smile that was brimming with confidence,

"Who knows? I don't know what the **<< Tenma >>** is up to. However, all I'm doing is merely what I wanted to do."

He said.

And Himea asked.

"What you wanted to do?"

And Gekkou answered. He answered with brimming confidence.

"Lording over others without getting lorded over."

And without thinking, Himea replied,

"..... are you an idiot?"

"I'm a genius."

"Huh? Erm....."

But Gekkou had not finished. With his smiling face,

"That's why I have lorded over the foolish stuck-up **<< Tenma >>**. I told them I would not do as they say. And that they should do as I say. And thus this is the end result."

On hearing those words, with a dumbstruck face,

"Ah, erm, I can't really see how that could have led up to the end result here though....."

Himea said, and to that, Gekkou let out a sigh. And with the same face as when he had said *"What language should I use before you get it? Idiot language?"* to Taito, as if he was looking down at her, he began,

"Then, what language....."

But before he could finish,

"It doesn't matter what language."

Himea interrupted.

"Even if it's Arabic or Hindi, I'll just translate them with my magic as I speak, so it doesn't matter what language you use..... but if it's possible, can you not use idiot language? I'll be pleased if you can use a human language that others can understand."

She said.

And on hearing that,

"....."

Gekkou kept silent for a while. And then,

"..... it'll be bothersome to start from the beginning though....."

"If you don't speak up, then we'll just return to the outset before."

And she raised her hand. And once again, the bluish white ball of flame used for summoning a demon came forth. Following that,

"..... and don't think that you're definitely going to win this time round....."

As she said that, Gekkou's face became deeply troubled,

"1, a monster suddenly came invading into the student council room.

2, we started battling the monster, but it was powerful beyond my expectations, and we got dragged into their world."

He started explaining things out of the blue in an itemized manner; *seems like this fella has no real intention of engaging in proper communication with others*, Himea thought.

Well, as long as he's willing to explain, anything's fine though.

Gekkou continued.

"3, even though the monster started saying something incomprehensible, at that time, since I knew that fundamentally I could not get an upper hand, I didn't probe deeply into what they said. That was why I didn't plan to inquire about you as well."

"Hey you....."

But Gekkou continued further.

"4, they called themselves the **<< Tenma >>**.

5, they said that they have come to tell me how to kill **<< Most Ancient Witch >>** (Ramiel Lilith).

6, I don't remember asking for anything of that sorts. What are you going to tell me? Don't bother me. I replied .

7, *If you don't kill* ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** (*Ramiel Lilith*)*, we'll kill Saitohimea*, they said. Please feel free, but if you lay your

hands on my students, don't think that I'll let it pass, get it? I replied.

8, but the **<< Tenma >>** seem to be as thick-headed as you, and did not react to my words. *We'll tell you how to kill* **<< *Most Ancient Witch* >>** *Ramiel Lilith*. *Kill her when you find her, kill her when you find her* ---, and they kept repeating that.

9, that's why I repeated as well. Shall I tell you about what happened to the other gods and demons who laid their hands on my school? Shall I tell you about each and every episode in a way that even your rotten brains can comprehend? I repeated.

10, before long, the **<< Tenma >>** bowed down to my greatness and started listening to me. And at the end, they said, *since one day,* **<< *Most Ancient Witch* >>** *Ramiel Lilith will probably come attack your school, and if during then, you would kill her for us, we'll lend you our power.*

11, does that mean that you'll become my slaves? I asked, and they answered yes.

12, if you are becoming my slaves, then lend me your power. Tell me how to kill **<< Most Ancient Witch >>** **Ramiel Lilith**. And in return for that, don't touch my things, I said.

13, and the **<< Tenma >>** said that they understood.

And well, in other words, because of that, I can guarantee the safety of my things, including you. Get it? If you get it, then you can spend the rest of your life returning the debt to your master who has saved your life."

Gekkou finished in a breath.

And finally,

"..... jeez, all that talking has made my throat dry. Where did that idiot who went to buy Cola go?"

After saying that, he turned on his heel. And went back into the student council room.

Looking at his back,

"....."

What the hell is with this fella? Himea thought.

He had actually negotiated with the **<< Tenma >>** in a high and mighty manner.

That **<< Tenma >>**.

"....."

A mere human negotiated in a high and mighty way with the former ruler of the world.

That was a terribly dangerous thing to do. No, he should have firsthand knowledge on how foolish that was. He should have been able to feel the power of the **< < Tenma >>**, which was overwhelming to a level way beyond that of a human.

But yet, he negotiated.

And also.

"..... you went out of the way to ask them not to touch me?"

As Himea asked, Gekkou turned around.

"That's right. Are you so grateful that you could cry?"

He said to her, but,

"Why?"

She asked. With absolute doubt.

"Why did you do such a thing? Humans, aren't humans creatures who could only think for themselves.....
.."

At those words, Mirai who was beside Gekkou replied . With a bewildering jubilant expression,

"You know you know, Gekkou is really awesome! Do you know what he said when the **<< Tenma >>** asked him to hand over you, Hime-chan?"

She said.

And for some reason, Gekkou had a rare, slightly frantic expression on hearing that,

"Shut up."

He said, but Mirai continued. With an uncontrollably delighted face,

"You know! With a face like this, Gekkou said *Unfortunately, I'm different from my second-rated little brother, and will not betray my comrades*....."

But, at that moment,

"I thought I told you to shut up, fool!"

Gekkou suddenly kicked Mirai's face.

And in response,

"Gyaaa ~♪"

Mirai was sent flying. With a force that could have killed a normal girl, she banged into the wall of the corridor, fell over, and while lying on the floor, as if she was totally unaffected by the kick of a human, she continued.

"Ehheheh ~ <3. Gekkou is so shy....."

"..... I see. That's it. It's time for your punishment."

"Huh, eh? Ah, wait a minute Gekkou. Wahwahwahwah, timeout timeout! I'll shut up! I'll keep quiet ~♪"

As she saw Gekkou about to draw his sword, Mirai jumped up and frantically covered her mouth with both hands. But even so, her eyes were dancing in delight.

After Gekkou told Mirai how he would kill her later as he glared at her, he turned towards Himea uncomfortably,

"..... whatever this fella said were all lies."

He said.

"And besides, the student council work is increasing. I'm in need of people who can manage the paper work among other things as well. In other words, it'll be troublesome if a subordinate gets taken away."

He said.

On hearing that, Mirai tried to contain her laughter, and following that, Gekkou started to kick towards her again.

Promptly dodging the kick, Mirai turned towards Himea. Beaming happily.

"Hime-chan and us are comrades, comrades ~"

She said happily.

Gekkou scowled, and ignoring her,

"Anyway, you guys are saved by me. Just think only about repaying the debt. Get it?"

After saying that, he once again returned to the student council room.

And Mirai followed behind him as well, waggling like a dog.

Gazing after the two of them.

"....."

As a **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>** (Vampire) who rightfully should not have any comrades, Himea gazed after the strange student council president and demon girl who had called her their comrade at their own whim,

"..... what, was that?"

She said.

And then, at that moment,

"Huh? Himea, why are you still standing in the corridor."

A voice called out suddenly from behind her.

She turned around. And there was Taito.

She then made a smiling face and said,

"Erm, I'm waiting for you, Taito."

And with his usual troubled face, he smiled,

"Eh ~, you could have just waited inside for me. Here's your Fanta, Himea."

And he handed her a can-like object. She took it. Feeling the coldness in her hand,

"It's cold."

She said, to which Taito looked at her,

"Er, did you want a warm one?"

But she shook her head.

"Nope. I'm fine with the same one as you're having."

"Really?"

"Yup."

"I really love Fanta, you know ~. But it's a little hard to find it."

As he said that,

"Heehh ~. Fanta fanta."

She repeated. By the way, in the **Language Translation** magic that she's using, the word 'Fanta' was not recorded , and the sound of the word felt a little strange to her.

As she shook her Fanta,

"How do you drink this?"

She asked, and he frantically replied,

"Ah, you can't shake it like that. The carbonic acid in it will make it overflow. Erm, ah~, take mine instead. Er, let's go back into the student council room to drink it."

After saying that, Taito took the Fanta from her,

"This time, you can't shake it ok."

After reminding her, he passed her his own can. And once again, she started shaking it, and he responded frantically,

"Ah ~, I told you not to do that!"

On hearing that, Himea said,

"Did I surprise you?"

She laughed mischievously. And then, after realizing that he got teased, Taito frowned,

"Jeez ~."

He said.

Looking at that face, Himea laughed again.

And she could feel herself regaining her composure. Looking at his smiling face, she managed to calm down her worked-up emotions that had arisen from the series of abnormal events that had taken place earlier in this corridor.

And she started thinking rationally again.

It seemed like the **<< Tenma >>** was not going to lay their hands on Himea after they struck a deal with the student council president.

Well, she could not know for sure whether that was really the case, but if it was.

If it was.

"..... I'm not going to die."

She murmured softly.

That was an unbelievable thing. Since during the time when she had brought Taito back to life, she had already given up on her life. A **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** who had lost her powers would get devoured by the **<< Tenma >>**. That was a thing of certainty to her, and she had already thought that she would disappear, but yet.

For some reason, she was still alive and able to stay by his side.

That was an unbelievable thing.

She would never have dreamed that she would still be able to stay by the side of Taito after getting attacked by the **<< Tenma >>**.

That was why.

"....."

She looked up at Taito who was right beside her. And gazed into his face.

And he said,

"What's wrong?"

And he turned towards her, with a smile on his face.

Why is it that just by looking at that smiling face of his, there's so much unbelievable joy running inside of me?

The throbbing emotions which she had thought was fully under her control for a long time were racing inside her with a will of their own.

And then,

"Aah."

Once again, she let out a sigh. She wondered what it was that made her feel that kind of pain in her heart whenever she looked at his face.

And she pressed her hand on her sailor uniform against her chest,

"I feel so joyful just by being with Taito."

She said.

On hearing that, Taito made a troubled face again, to which she laughed.

But those words were true.

Rather, when she was born, she had never felt that way before. Before meeting Taito, she had always been in solitude, solitude, solitude; she was in so much solitude that she thought she would disappear from that pain.

That's why she gently touched his arms. And then,

"Can we lock arms ~?"

"Hhey, aren't you doing it already?"

"Ahha. That's rightt."

She said, and she clung to him even more tightly.

She clung to Taito's arm.

And she thought.

I don't want to let go of this arm again, she thought. *I don't want to let go of this warmth again*, she thought.

She didn't want to be alone anymore.

If she had to be alone, she would rather die.

That's why she had conferred him life.

An eternal life so that he would never leave her side ever.

So that they could be together forever.

So that he would continue laughing beside her for eternity.

And because of that ---

Chapter 3 - Crow and Rabbit

And because of that, ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) went mad ---*

Gekkou recalled the words of the **<< Tenma >>**.

"....."

He sat on a chair in the student council room, and started thinking quietly.

The student council room was really in a big mess.

The white board which was filled with Mirai's scrawling was ripped apart, the desk which he had taken a liking to was broken, and the tea set which he loved to use was no where in sight.

He sat in that thoroughly destroyed room. As he sat in the lone chair that was left untouched amid the destruction, *that's not fair*, Mirai started complaining, but he could care less. The king sits on his throne. Slaves can just crawl on the ground.

At that moment, he could hear the voices of his slaves.

From the corridor outside.

That cursed man of a slave has finally bought the cola huh, he thought as he heard foolish laughter and chattering going between that cursed man and Saitohimea.

He looked in the direction of the voices.

He looked with a sharp gaze,

"....."

And then, he recalled the strange events which had just taken place.

That was a memory from just minutes ago.

He had been dragged suddenly by some unknown thing into a strange world, and there, he had had a conversation with a few of the monsters known as the **<< Tenma >>**.

He recalled all those things.

♦

The ***<< Tenma >>*** *said this.*

<< We've come to teach you how to kill that witch..... that crazy ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *who would turn the world into an anomaly. >>*

Right away, Gekkou knew who that ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *was referring to. It was Saitohimea. Rather, there was someone else who had called her a* ***<< Witch >>*** *instead of* ***<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>****.*

And that someone was Hinata.

"....."

From the considerate warning given annoyingly by that damn irritating little brother of his, he understood.

He recalled the warning from his little brother.

"It's better to give up on keeping Saitohimea, Nii-san. My foolish big brother probably won't be able to handle that mad witch..... well, since you probably won't listen to me even if I tell you that, in the case that you plan to go ahead in keeping that woman without knowing your place, I have a warning to offer you. Beware of the encroachment from the ***Moon****....."*

Mad witch.

Encroachment from the ***Moon****.*

What was Hinata planning in telling him this?

The mad witch was probably referring to Saitohimea.

And with regards to the encroachment from the ***Moon*** *---*

He then asked the ***<< Tenma >>****.*

"I see. Are you the ones that have come encroaching from the ***Moon****?"*

<< Moon? Are you talking about the place where the monster

who had given birth to ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) lives? But never mind. You only need to think about killing that witch. >>*

On hearing those words, Gekkou responded.

"..... who are you giving orders to?"

<< You, black crow. >>

"I've told you I'm not a crow."

<< Hahaha, hahaha. >>

On hearing that,

"..... this is pissing me off."

He muttered.

He alone should be the only one who can laugh mockingly at another but ---

"Dammit, this is pissing me off."

Gekkou looked up at the ***<< Tenma >>*** *with a scowl on his face.*

However, just as he thought, he could not tell how the ***<< Tenma >>*** *really looked like. Since they were too humongous, he couldn't tell what they really were and how they really looked like. As he looked up at that unknown thing, he thought.*

This could be really bad, he thought.

And he remembered that during the time when he became the student council president of Miyasaka High, the ***<< Military >>*** *had handed him a small booklet which to him had a messed up title - "Student Council President Handbook" - and in it, was documented the reasons behind the deaths of the previous student council presidents.*

While most of the student council presidents died as a result of their weakness or foolishness, occasionally, when a capable student council president got killed, in most cases, it was due to bad luck when a ***<< Way >>*** *connected the student council room to a place where a monster with an incredible amount of power resided.*

But even so, for a person who possessed enough power to become the student council president, even if he were to stand in such a place before such a vicious monster, he would be able to take the appropriate countermeasures and survive.

Rather, a few of them did survive and had recorded the countermeasures.

Close the **<< Way >>**.

Negotiate with the monster.

Kill the monster.

Run away for now.

No matter how bad the situation was, there was a way out.

However, from the previous generations of student council presidents, there were these words ---

"If the thing that lived there is so huge that the human eye could not make out its features completely, retreat immediately . That is probably not a living thing --- but a god."

In other words, the things before him now.

The monsters before him now that were filling up this world,

"Are gods?"

Gekkou muttered.

"..... so, Mr High and Mighty, you want me to kill Saitohimea?"

He said.

"But it's too bad. I'm not like my second rate little brother, and I subscribe to the principle of not betraying my comrades. If you want to kill Saitohimea, look for somebody else."

Subsequently, he felt a tinge of regret. He could have made a bad move in ignoring his little brother's warning that it's impossible for him to keep Saitohimea.

However, in response to that, the ***<< Tenma >>*** *said.*

<< No, the one you are to kill is ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith). Not Saitohimea. >>*

They said. On hearing that, Gekkou tilted his head,

"The one called ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) is....."*

<< One who desecrates stars. An aberrant god. >>

"Hmm. So, you want me to exterminate that?"

But the ***<< Tenma >>*** *did not answer to that. However, Gekkou continued.*

"Hah. A monster being afraid of another monster?"

And then, in response to that,

<< Haha, the ones who should really be afraid of them should be you humans..... you are all too foolish. To not be able to realize their existence. That's why we..... >>

"Took on the fear in place of us?"

<< ..... will deal with them for you. >>

"Hmm. That's really kind of you."

<< That's right. We are constantly being considerate for you. >>

"Haha."

<< Now, open your eyes, left head of the crow. We'll teach you the way to kill ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith).*

Just as Gekkou was about to tell the ***<< Tenma >>*** *to shut up. Just as he was about to tell them he wouldn't do as they say.*

His eyes opened on their own instead. Through some unknown power, his eyelids, feeling an insufferable amount of

pain, opened up, and on top of that, at the center of his jet black eyes, his pupils widened.

His pupils widened on their own.

Unable to adjust their size in accordance to the amount of incoming light, an intense, blinding amount of light came streaming in.

"....."

No, the thing that entered was not light. If one were to ask him what had entered, he would have no answer to that.

And at that moment,

"..... Gekkou, are you alright?"

Mirai, who had accompanied him here, said in a worried voice.

On hearing that,

"..... no problem at all. Don't worry."

But even when he said that, he was unsure himself as to how worried he should be with regards to the current situation.

A situation in which his whole world was a brilliant white, where he could see nothing at all.

A situation where the monsters before him, who was called the ***<< Tenma >>****, was an enigma to him.*

But yet, he pretended that nothing was amiss and said.

"What the hell did you guys do to me?"

And the ***<< Tenma >>*** *answered.*

<< Fufu, the crow this time round is pretty spirited. Two crows, and a dark rabbit..... maybe, there's something wrong... ... >>

But they were cut off,

"I'm asking you what the hell did you guys do to me?"

<< Hahaha. >>

"I'll kill you, you know?"

<< Hahaha. >>

On hearing that laughter that was getting on his nerves, he reached into his breast pocket, attempting to take out a string. He already knew that the Wicked Blade Spell Error won't work on these fellas. Then, if he were to use another spell object.....

But, at that moment,

<< HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA. >>

All of a sudden, his head was filled with that ear-splitting laughter.

Following that, all of a sudden, he could feel his right hand, which was about to take out a spell object, get torn off.

He wanted to scream out involuntarily at the excruciating pain, but no voice came out. He could not even control his own mouth.

Following that, his left arm tore off. Right leg, left leg. His organs split open, and everything below his head were gone.

In response to that,

"..... uwu, ah."

A moan escaped from him. At the same time, vision returned to him.

He then looked at his own body.

He looked at his own body, which should have been blasted apart.

But, his arms, legs, and everything else were intact, as if nothing had happened at all.

"..... an illusion."

He said in a groaning tone.

However, even if that was an illusion, the feeling of his body been blasted apart once, still remained. The damage which was so great to the point that he could no longer stand properly, remained within him.

Involuntarily, his knees buckled and he started falling to the ground.

Seeing his own weakness, he then said to himself,

"..... damn, there's no way I can't stand the same amount of pain that the idiot Taito could go through right....."

Kurogane Taito had underwent countless times of getting his flesh ripped apart, his body destroyed, then getting resurrected, and jumping around energetically after that.

If that idiot could do it, there was no way that he couldn't.....

"....."

But, in the end, he couldn't.

His knees reached the ground.

And Mirai from beside him,

"Gekkou!"

She cried out and came to support him.

On seeing that,

"Don't touch me!"

He yelled angrily, but Mirai did not listen. With that, she supported his shoulder.

If she hadn't come support him.

If Mirai hadn't come support him, he would have ended up lying on the ground. And then, as Gekkou looked at the face of his subordinate who was looking intently at him worriedly,

"....."

He felt exasperation.

With that, he looked up at the ***<< Tenma >>****.*

He looked up at the ***<< Tenma >>*** *that seemed to be as powerful as a god,*

"Do you think you've won?"

In response to that,

<< We've placed the power to kill ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) inside you. >>*

"..... answer me. Do you think you've won with this?"

He asked.

However, he already knew that they wouldn't answer. These fellas were creatures who wouldn't see any worth in conversing with humans.

That's why the ***<< Tenma >>*** *said blandly. As if they could care less about Gekkou's words,*

<< We will leave the rest to your judgement. If Saitohimea, who had gone mad from the loneliness, were to awake once again as ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) to make use of the* ***<< Tenma >>****, kill her. >>*

They said.

On hearing that,

"..... to make use of the ***<< Tenma >>****, you said? Aren't the* ***<< Tenma >>*** *you guys?"*

Hahaha, the ***<< Tenma >>*** *laughed again. Merely laughing, without answering. Right from the start, he didn't really understand what they were talking about, and they probably did not have any intention of explaining things.*

No, in the first place, it was quite unthinkable that one could understand these fellas with a human's common sense.

That's why Gekkou said.

"..... alright, I got it. I'd agree to it. I shall grant you your wish. But this is a trade. In return for fulfilling your request.... .."

<< Hahaha, haven't we already given it? Human. If not for us, your world will not exist. >>

They said something incomprehensible again. But Gekkou said.

"Not enough."

<< Hahaha. >>

"That's not enough. So promise me this. I shall grant you your wish. And in return for that, do not lay hands on me and my things again."

He said.

In response to that,

<< ..... is that your wish? >>

"That's right."

<< Ha, hahaha, you really are an interesting crow. Even though you have no idea what you're saying..... but yet, you've made an interesting choice..... alright. We shall entrust

*everything to you. The **Ma**[7] from the west had said that the right head was an interesting one..... but well well, the left head is also quite something..... >>*

"Then, there's nothing else for me?"

<< Yeah. >>

"You won't lay a hand on Saitohimea as well?"

<< Yeah. But, you will definitely kill her. That witch will definitely awaken and attack you guys. >>

"No need for you to worry. I don't let my slaves run amok."

<< ..... haha. Is that so? If that's the case, it'd be great. Then do your very best. And if that witch continues to remain mad and forget her own purpose, she will not be touched..... at the very least, not by us..... >>

The ***<< Tenma >>*** *said.*

Just as Gekkou was about to ask further, suddenly,

"....."

The ***<< Tenma >>*** *disappeared from his sight.*

No, no, the scenery before him had completely disappeared.

In place of that, was the badly wrecked student council room .

Before he knew it, Gekkou was kneeling in the student council room. Mirai, who was supporting him from beside,

"Huh, huh?"

Like a blockhead, her eyes widened,

"Huh ~, we're back."

She said.

On hearing that,

"..... damn."

Gekkou muttered softly.

On saying that, he stood up. As he stood up, from beside his ear,

"Come, let's go meet Saitohimea. Let's see whether the witch is really mad."

A voice resounded. But, he could not feel the overwhelming presence earlier. He did not shrink himself just from hearing the voice, which did not possess the overwhelming pressure from earlier.

In response to the voice which had no form,

"Are you also a ***<< Tenma >>****?"*

As he asked, it replied.

"A servant."

"..... servant..... a servant of the ***<< Tenma >>****? In other words, are you a Tenshi like the silver haired monster who came here this afternoon?"*

As he asked again, it replied.

*"..... I don't know anyone like that. It's probably the blockhead servant of the **Ma** of the west..... that's enough, let's get going. Let's go place a seal so that the maddened Saitohimea won't awaken."*

"Huh? Didn't you guys say that you won't lay a hand on Saitohimea....."

But, he was interrupted by the voice, which said.

"In order for that to happen, I'm going to place a seal. So that we can have a peace of mind. If she continues to remain mad like this, it will be the best outcome though....."

At that moment, another voice rang out.

From outside the student council room.

The voice of his idiotic slave could be heard from the corridor .

"Don't shit with me! I will never, I will never hand over Himea! Damn Gekkou, what the hell are you doing! You can

hear my voice right! If you can, then quickly get your ass out here and do away this monster! If you don't, I will, I will put dog poop on top of your desk later."

On hearing the yell, Gekkou said.

"..... who is attacking my comrades?"

In response, the servant of the ***<< Tenma >>*** *--- the Tenshi[8], answered.*

"Our comrades..... but, in accordance with our deal, we're stopping the attack."

"And?"

"I will enter the body of Saitohimea, and place a curse to prevent her from awakening. In her current weakened state, she probably will not notice my curse. But, before that....."

The Tenshi said.

"Before that, you must ask Saitohimea. You must ask her about the name of ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith). That will bring the information regarding* ***<< Most Ancient Witch >>*** *(Ramiel Lilith) up to the surface of her consciousness. And I'll seal that."*

On hearing those words,

"....."

Gekkou did not reply. But, the Tenshi continued further.

"It's fine even if you don't want to do as we say. If you don't help us, the deal will be void. And we'll kill Saitohimea... ..."

But, at that moment,

"..... wait."

Gekkou said.

"Fine. I'll lend you a hand."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah."

"Then, let's get on with it. If you hesitate any further, Saitohimea will die, you know."

And he hesitated no more.

He hesitated no more in lending a hand to the ***<< Tenma >>****.*

He didn't know whether that decision was the right one, or a mistake. Since he didn't believe that the monster known as the ***<< Tenma >>*** *would tell him the whole truth.*

However, under such circumstances, he could do nothing else but that.

That's why.

♦

"....."

Gekkou raised his eyebrows slightly at his recollections, and looked intently in the direction of the corridor.

From the corridor, the slaves were talking about how shaking the Fanta will cause the carbonic acid to overflow, and making their way towards the room.

Then, Mirai said. In a soft voice,

"..... Hime-chan really doesn't know her own name right?"

On hearing those words, Gekkou looked in the direction of Mirai.

Looking intently at the demon who looked like a brat,

"Yeah. But, will she be happier not knowing, or will she be better off knowing....."

I have no idea, Gekkou thought.

There were too many things concerning the **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer Vampire >>** Saitohimea which he did not know.

He had to,

"..... I have to investigate, I guess."

Gekkou murmured.

Even if not so, he had already requested the **<< Military >>** to investigate the true nature of the **<<**

Tenma >>. In the meantime, the investigation data would probably be sent in. That's why there was no need for him to think about it for a while. Using the investigation data from the **<< Military >>** as the reference point, he would move accordingly.

More urgently, there was something else he needed to think about.

"....."

He looked out the window. On the edge of the schoolyard. The huge camphor tree there was supposed to be the center of a barrier that was supposed to make the school hard to detect by other organizations, but that barrier was destroyed by someone.

Even though right now, the barrier was once again erected,

"..... something had penetrated through once."

Gekkou murmured.

However, it was clear to him that it wasn't the **<< Tenma >>**. Ignoring the barrier deployed in the school, the **<< Tenma >>** had infiltrated into this very place.

Without even destroying the school's strongest barrier deployed over this student council room, the **<< Tenma >>** had infilitrated into it readily. If they possessed such great power, there would be no need for them to destroy the barrier over the school.

Then, who was the one who had destroyed the barrier of the camphor?

And to what ends?

"....."

Even though he tried thinking about it, nothing came up as a result of his serious sleep deprivation.

Since the series of events that had started yesterday, he had not yet slept at all. Even if he tried thinking about something under such circumstances, he wouldn't be able to come up with a good plan at all.

That's why ---

At that moment, Taito and Himea entered the room.

Ignoring them, Gekkou took out his cellphone from his pocket and started connecting to the **<< Military >>**. And then, the usual cold voice of a woman was heard.

"Yes."

"I'm feeling sleepy so I'm going back."

"Huh? But....."

"No 'but's. I'm the type who can't move while I'm sleepy. Since my efficiency will suffer."

"No, but the upper echelons of the ***<< Military >>*** *are taking emergency precautionary measures....."*

"Do as you wish."

"But....."

And at that moment, after entering the student council room, Taito made a *I've bought the drinks you know* face in a condescending manner. *Hand it over*, Gekkou made a hand gesture.

Taito then tossed him a plastic bottle. Gekkou received it.

By the way, Gekkou should have originally told Taito to get him a cola, but, for some reason, the bottle he held had a gaudy red label that said, 'Dr. Pepper'.

Gekkou looked at that.

Without saying anything, he looked.

"....."

Then, through his phone, the woman from the **<< Military >>** spoke,

"..... erm, you've been quiet all this while, did something happen?"

"....."

"..... President Kurenai Gekkou..... shall I dispatch reinforcements?"

However, Gekkou did not reply.

As he looked up, Kurogane Taito, who didn't even have the sense to know where he stood as a slave, was clutching his stomach, laughing.

"Didn't you want to drink that?"

He said.

"I can treat you."

He said.

Once again, Gekkou looked at the thing he held in his hand.

He looked at the legendary thing which its passionate fans and the fellas in Texas will only drink. the passionate fans and the fellas in Texas will drink nothing but this. -->

And then, slowly, he started shaking that legendary thing with all his strength.

As Taito realized what he was about to do,

"Wah, wah, wait, stop! I'm just kidding! I did buy your cola....."

He said, but Gekkou did not stop. Sandwiching his cellphone between his ear and shoulder, he unscrewed the bottle cap. And at the same time, he threw it towards the fool.

As he did that, the Dr. Pepper colored carbonic acid burst forth, and started spewing out in the student council room.

Taito shielded his head with his hands.

"Gyaa."

He yelled.

Saitohimea readily used her magic to repel that scattering liquid.

Mirai jumped in to taste the droplets,

"Uwu, uwu, uwoahhh ~, what's this what's this!? Incredible, incredibly good!"

And thus, she became one of the rare individuals who were chosen by Dr. Pepper.

And last but not least,

"I heard screaming, is everything ok? I'll dispatch reinf....."

However, Gekkou cut her off and said.

"..... no, there's no problem. I just finished off the last of the enemies."

Then Taito said,

"Damn you, don't screw with me. Aren't you going too far!"

Following that, Mirai said,

"What's that just now? What drink was that?"

Gekkou then waved his hand to signal to his small fries to stop the ruckus and disappear. And of course, the fools who couldn't understand human language wouldn't go away just like that.

Ignoring them, Gekkou returned his attention to his conversation with the **<< Military >>**.

"Anyway, take care of the few important matters. Perhaps, I might have missed out a few things, but I'm sleepy, so I'm going home."

"Going home..... that will be troubling....."

"Not to me."

"The upper echelons have already set up an inquiry board on the President's abuse of powers....."

"Tell them to shut up."

"Pres....."

"The things you need to do are simple. Investigate into the barrier breach. Repair the destroyed classrooms. Report to me how long the repairs will take. Until then, the school will be closed. Inform the students on that. Get it?"

"..... understood. I understood but, if President doesn't offer an explanation to the ***<< Military >>*** *on the enemy breach this time....."*

"I'm also a victim here. Tell the useless guys not to make any opinions."

"I, I can't possibly tell that to....."

However, as always, Gekkou hung up. And he sighed out softly in tiredness.

With stark amazement written on his face, Taito said,

"..... was that the **<< Military >>**? You really hold that kind of attitude to everyone huh."

Gekkou then looked up at Taito,

"What attitude?"

"Well, that high and mighty attitude."

"Is that a problem?"

"Er~m."

"If there's none, shut up."

"Errrr~mm."

Gekkou ignored the dissatisfied moan from the fool who was covered with Dr. Pepper,

"Whatever, just quickly hand over the cola, Mr Pepper."

"Who are you calling Mr Pepper?"

"Whatever."

He said.

Reluctantly, Taito took out a can of cola from the carrier and handed it over. He opened it and took a drink . As the carbonic acid passed through his throat, he could feel a little refreshed, but, his sleepiness remained. And so,

"Alright, let's go back and get some sleep."

Said Gekkou.

Then, Taito started,

"Eehh ~, is that all? How about thanks for the cola?"

"Huh."

"No, not 'huh'..... ahh, erm, oh well. Yeah, can I go back as well?"

"Are you begging me?"

"..... I'm going to kick your ass."

The small fry howled.

Gekkou sighed out again, took another drink from the cola can, and stood up.

"Let's go back, Mirai."

Mirai then looked at him,

"Orh ~! But before that, can you buy that Gekkou! That really tasted good!"

"Whatever you want, quickly get ready to go back."

"Alright!"

Mirai picked up the bag at the corner of the student council room.

Gekkou looked at her and then looked around the student council room once more.

The student council room that was badly destroyed. No, not just here. As well as the places where Taito and Himea had fought the other **<< Tenma >>**. If that's the

case, the affected places could very well encompass the whole school. Even if the **<< Military >>** worked hard in using their magic to carry out the restoration, the school would probably be closed for a number of days.

"....."

Then, in the meantime, I can look into the ***<< Tenma >>*** *---,* Gekkou thought.

"But right now, I really need to sleep."

After saying that, he issued a command.

To the student council room.

He issued a command to the **<< Holy Ground >>**.

"Open a **<< Way >>**. I'm going home."

A rift then appeared in the center of the white concrete wall. Through that hole, on the other side, was his room. A room with only a bed and a desk. Gekkou's room.

Just as he was about to enter the rift into his room, for some reason, Mirai cried out,

"Eh ~!"

And then,

"If we go through the rift, then I won't be able to buy that tasty stuff!"

She said.

Gekkou then looked at Mirai, and saw her pouting angrily,

"Gekkou, you said that you're going to buy that for me !"

She made a face, behaving like a complete child. Just as he was about to call her an annoying idiot, he stopped and gave up. In the past, when he said the same thing when she asked for Chuupetto[9], she started crying and making a ruckus that made him really fed up.

As a result, he scowled,

"..... I'll give you some pocket money and you can go to a nearby supermarket to buy it."

"Yay!"

"Let's go."

"Yeah!"

And Gekkou started to make his way back to his house .

On seeing that, Taito began,

"Ah, wait a minute Gekkou, I have something to talk.... .."

"Not to me."

"Damn you....."

Ignoring him, he passed through the rift, and fell onto his bed. Immediately after that, he closed the portal. While Taito was yelling about something on the other side of the rift, he could care less.

Just as Mirai was about to switch on the lights in the room,

"Don't turn them on."

He commanded.

"I hate darkness ~."

"Are you a kid?"

"What about the pocket money?"

"Look for it yourself in my pocket. I'm going to sleep."

After saying that, he closed his eyes.

The room was dark.

Just three days ago, he got the curtains changed to ones with shades, and thank god for that.

If he was still using the curtains with the automobile cartoons, bought by his parents in the past, it would be difficult to sleep since they would be ineffective in blocking out the setting rays from the west.

However, the shades curtains properly blocked out the sunlight, and the room was dark.

In that darkness, Mirai searched through his pocket and fished out some money.

"Erm, what's the name of that tasty stuff?"

She asked. Gekkou then replied in a tired voice.

"Doctor Pepper."

"Doctor Pepper ~. Doctor Pepper ~. Ok. Got it. Is there anything else you want me to buy?"

"None."

"Then, I'm leaving."

"Go."

"Alroight."

"Remember to lock the door."

"Alroight alroight."

After saying that, Mirai dashed out of the room. After ascertaining that,

"..... damn, today was a long day....."

He muttered and closed his eyes.

As he did that, his consciousness immediately sank into deep darkness. Within that darkness, he tried to ruminate on the things that had happened throughout the day, but that consciousness melted into the deeper part of the darkness.

And before he knew it.

Truly, before he knew it, he entered the world of dreams.

There, it was a place of tranquility, filled with light.

The curtains did not block out the light at all, and his parents, who were still alive, were smiling happily,

"See see, these are the curtains with the automobile cartoons that Gekkou and Hinata like ~"

They said.

Even though Gekkou had never mentioned once that he like automobiles, if his parents were happy, just let them be, he thought.

And he looked to his side,

"....."

He looked at his little brother beside him, who seemed to think the same way, making a slightly troubled, yet delighted face as he looked back at him.

Meeting the eyes of Hinata.

A smile which only the two of them could understand then floated on Gekkou's face.

And he thought.

If everyone is happy, so be it, he thought.

For such an instant.

"....."

For such an instant, he saw a foolish dream from a long time ago.

Shigure Haruka and Saitohimea

Infiltrating the place still made his heart race a little in spite of knowing full well that there was no one there.

"....."

An empty teachers' room.

Test papers that were in the midst of being graded, half-drunk tea.

Despite the fact that there was no one there, a consequence of perhaps the teachers having gotten forcibly evicted from the school due to a passing demon, he still had a lingering anxiety towards the teachers' room.

Taito opened the door to the teachers' room, and entered.

And then as he looked around,

"If I remember correctly, Karino's desk is beside the window ~"

He murmured and searched for the desk of his homeroom teacher.

From behind him,

"Why are you speaking so softly?"

Asked Himea.

Taito then looked behind him.

"Ah erm, somehow."

"Eh?"

"The teachers' room is a place we can't normally enter, so I'm a little nervous."

Taito said, to which Himea tilted her head incredulously, unable to comprehend his feelings,

"Then I shall speak softly as well!"

She said.

Ok~, Taito made an appropriate response and started searching for the right desk. After looking around the

room for a while, he noticed that each desk had a name plate attached and said,

"Ah, this makes it easier."

After scrutinizing over several name plates, he found the desk of his homeroom teacher.

Normally, Karino would be particular about the cleaniless of the class, and as a result, the rumor, *he's definitely got A-blood*, would circulate among the girls; somehow, he really seemed to be of A-blood, judging from how neat and tidy his desk appeared.

Looking down at the desk,

"I'm sorry Sensei, I'm going to rummage your desk."

He murmured.

With that, he opened the first drawer. But he couldn't find what he was looking for, and subsequently, he opened the next one. However, he still couldn't find it.

At that moment, from right beside him, Himea's head poked out and peered into the face of the Taito who was rummaging the desk,

"Hey hey hey, what are you looking for?"

She asked.

And Taito replied,

"Name register."

That's right.

What he was looking for was the name register which contained the addresses of the students of Miyasaka High. Even though Miyasaka High had also adopted the latest widespread privacy reason that they won't make name registers, there was no way that the teachers wouldn't know the addresses of the students, and that was what he was looking for.

And as he was rummaging the largest third drawer,

"Ah, here it is."

Taito murmured. He then took out from the drawer, a small booklet on which was written, 'Miyasaka High Address Records'. And started flipping the pages.

"Erm, what's the class number of that fella again....."

While saying that, he searched for Gekkou's address. And there it was, Kurenai Gekkou's name on the page of class 9.

Looking at that address. With a slight frown on his face,

"What, isn't this close to my house?"

He said.

Himea peered over at the register as well,

"Ah, are you going to Gekkou's place?"

She asked.

Taito nodded.

"There's something I wanted to ask him, but he had gone home right away before I could do that ~"

"Something you wanted to ask?"

"Yeah."

"What's that?"

"Huh?"

Taito looked up and looked at Himea. And then,

"Erm, a number of things."

As he answered, Himea's mischievous deep crimson eyes sparkled,

"Ah ~, sounds fishy ~."

She said.

"Something you need to hide from me?"

"No no, it's not that though."

"Then what is it ~?"

"No erm, don't worry about it, really. It's not something important."

"Ehh ~ you've made me even more curious now ~ C'mon, tell me about it. It's not good to keep things from me, you know ~"

Even as she pressed on, Taito could not reply.

Rather, there's no way he could tell her about it.

Because, what he wanted from Gekkou.

"....."

Because what he wanted from that stuck-up idiotic student council president was,

"In order to properly protect Himea next time when such a thing happens again, what kind of training should I undertake ?"

An answer to such an embarrassing question of his.

That was why Taito frantically averted his eyes from Himea, secretly memorized Gekkou's address from the register, and put it back into the drawer.

And then,

"..... really, it's nothing important so don't concern yourself with it."

He said.

Of course, Himea couldn't accept that.

"..... hmm. Hmmmmmmm ~. Taito has something that he needs to hide from me ~"

"No no, it's really nothing ok?"

"Hmm."

"Really, I'm telling you."

"Hmm ~. Oh well. I'm also keeping some secrets from Taito anyway."

She said, and on hearing that,

"Is that so?"

Taito asked. Her very existence was an enigma itself, and even if there were one or two other secrets, it wasn't really anything to make a fuss about.

However, in a delighted manner,

"Are you bothered that I'm keeping secrets?"

She asked.

Taito then started,

"Erm."

"Are you bothered?"

"Erm..... yeah."

"But I'm not telling you ~!"

She said delightedly. In a flaunting manner, she puffed out her chest with her face saying, *I have a secret*.

Taito looked at her.

Her slightly bulging chest and her fair neck. And her lovely pink lips.

"....."

For some reason, when they came into his view, his pulse quickened suddenly.

Somehow, because of the series of events that had occurred just now, he had forgotten that he had just kissed her.

And it was also his first kiss. The very first since he was born. He had never once thought that such a kiss

was so overwhelming for him that he thought that he could die from it.

But, they did kiss.

On top of that, she had confessed to him, and he had replied in kind.

"....."

He somehow just realized that it was pretty big thing.

Probably, to any normal high school student, it was bigger than anything.

And right now, he was alone with her in the school.

Well, of course, there were a number of personnel dispatched from the **<< Military >>** who were carrying out repairs to the classrooms, but, in this teachers' room, no one else but the two of them were there.

Realizing that.

Realizing that, he nervously turned his gaze away from Himea's lips.

"..... eh ~, ah ~, well, I think it's about time for me to go back....."

He said in a faltering tone as if he were reading lines from a book.

On hearing that, Himea's expression turned into one of discontentment,

"Eh ~!?"

She said. Every time Taito said that he was going back, she would have that face. And her next words were,

"Well then, I'll follow Taito home....."

At that moment, he stopped her.

"No, you can't ~. Didn't I always tell you this, Gekkou had said that you need to stay in the barrier spread over the school, else you're gonna get attacked by the various organizations targeting you once you step out of the school, right? That's why you can't."

As he was saying that, he just remembered that even this school was just being attacked though..... that's why he felt anxious as well in having her stay here all by herself.

However, that's also why he needed to go.

He had to do something to prepare for the next time, when someone else comes to attack her again, he thought .

Rather, if he were to stay by her side now, he would just become a hindrance to her. With only his fifteen-minute conditional immortality, if a somewhat powerful monster appeared, he would just get killed numerous times readily, and in the end, he would be the one to be saved by Himea.

By Gekkou.

By Mirai.

A idiot like him getting saved.

In the student council which he belonged to, he was the weakest among all the men and women there.

Despite the fact that he had been doing karate for a number of years, as a student council executive member among his comrades, he was the one that could die most readily.

He couldn't stand himself remaining like that anymore , he thought.

That's why,

"..... a lot of things happened today, Himea, you're tired as well right? That's why you should get some rest. Even though I'm not like Gekkou, I'm also feeling a little sleepy ~"

He said.

And whenever he said that, *Then let's sleep together*, Himea would say, and frantically, *No no, that'll really be bad*, Taito would respond, and such a sudden exchange would be carried out between the pair of high school freshmen.

But, today was different.

"..... ah."

Said Himea, who for some reason, had a look of slight fear appearing on her face.

And then,

"..... that's right isn't it? You're tired. I'm sorry....."

She apologized suddenly, and Taito started frantically,

"Ah ~, erm no, that's not what I meant....."

But she shook her head. And smiled with a tinge of sadness,

"No. I'm also a little tired today. So Taito, it's ok to go back home. Sorry for holding you back."

She said.

However, there was no way he could go back after hearing that from her,

"Ah, ah, I think I better....."

"I say it's alright. See you tomorrow ~"

She smiled. With that, she skipped back and pulled away from him.

On seeing that, *Erm, as I thought, it's better for me to stay by your side today right?*, he wanted to say.

However, before he could say that,

"There's also something I need to do....."

Himea said.

"..... ah, I see."

Taito swallowed what he originally wanted to say.

"Then Himea, you're going back to your room?"

"Yeah."

"Then, I'll be going back."

"Yeah."

"Shall I see you to your room?"

On hearing that, she smiled. *It's ok*, she said and smiled.

And then,

"Taito."

"Yeah?"

"You know."

"Yeah?"

"Today, I'm really happy that you told me that you love me."

She said suddenly.

"I love you very much, Taito."

She said readily.

On hearing that,

"Ah ~, yeah."

That's all Taito said. Since he was not prepared for those sudden words, those were the only words he could say, like a blockhead.

After getting fed up with himself, he started thinking about a more proper reply, and finally,

"Erm, I too....."

Duh, I'm being too cliche right....., he made a silent jab at himself, and he left it at that.

However, in response to that, *ah-haha*, she laughed.

"Alright! It's more than enough for today ~"

She said.

"Ok, I'm going back to my room. Take a good rest as well, Taito."

After saying that, she started going out the teachers' room to the corridor, and waved.

Taito waved back as well.

"Alright. See you tomorrow."

"Ok, see you tomorrow."

With that, Himea left.

Looking after her retreating figure.

"....."

Following that, a small feeling of anti-climax followed. It'd be bad if he didn't get home soon ~, he thought. But then again, after what had just happened earlier, *maybe I should have stayed over*, he had played around with the thought,

"..... no, it's not like I'm expecting anything right."

He said with a slight tinge of sadness.

And then, he started to move.

He tidied up his homeroom teacher's desk, returning it to its original state before it was rummaged, and left the teachers' room. He went back to his own classroom and picked up his bag. He then left the school and as he was walking, he flipped open his phone. He entered Gekkou's address into the GPS functionality to ascertain the location of his residence, *it's seriously close*, he muttered.

And then, while he was making his way to Gekkou's house,

"....."

He recalled the look on Himea's face when she left the teachers' room just now.

"There's also something I need to do....."

He recalled her slightly tired looking face while she said that.

Clearly, she was hiding something.

No, she had always been hiding things, it's just that Taito did not know exactly what they were.

For example, she returned the already dead Taito back to life without being concerned with her own life. Even when she knew that she was going to die, she said nothing about it and every day, she merely kept talking about how blissful she was to be with Taito.

"....."

But, Taito didn't think it was terrible of her to do that. Since, even if she had discussed it with him, the him right now.

The me who has neither power nor knowledge,

"..... can't do anything about it anyway."

That's why she did not ask for help from anyone, and decided to just sacrifice herself alone.

It was the most terrible thing to have happened when she was about to die before his very eyes.

On top of that, how in the world did that incident get resolved?

No, in the first place, what in the world had happened in that corridor?

For now, Taito knew not a single thing about them.

Of course, if he put together bits and pieces of the events that had taken place before his eyes, at a glance, Himea had lost her powers as a consequence of bringing Taito back to life, and because of that, the Tenma took advantage of that --- that's as much as he knew.

And with regards to the Tenma, what in the world are they?

How in the world did Gekkou drive away the Tenma, who were monsters that were mighty enough to even strike despair into Himea?

Is Himea really safe now?

Or are there still going to be worse situations?

And what the hell is Bahlskra and that other woman personality?

And what in the world is that magic known as **<< Bliss >>**, which had given birth to that personality?

Well, with regards to all that, he needed to properly ask Gekkou.

But well, he was doubtful whether that student council president with a shitty personality would answer him honestly though.

But still, he felt that it was better to ask about the truth from him than from Himea.

Since she would probably hide a lot of things. Since she would probably do something stupid like hiding

various things from Taito in order to not become a burden to him, there was no way he could ask her.

And then, he smiled wryly to himself,

"..... since I can't be trusted anyway."

He murmured.

"Well, there's a certainty since I have no power whatsoever....."

As he was saying that, he crossed the intersection.

He crossed the intersection where he was knocked down by a truck not long ago which led to him regaining his immortality power and his memories of Himea, and entered the shopping district.

The town looked the same.

As a result of him living in this town since he was a child, what he could only see among the evening bustling crowd in the shopping district were faces that he knew.

But yet, all that appeared to be different today.

Even though when he ascended to high school from middle school, he had never thought that the way he would be seeing things could have changed so drastically . Right now, all the things around him seemed to be totally different from what they were just not long ago.

Finally, he had started high school, but never would he have thought he would be starting high school in such a manner, he thought.

And then.

"....."

He passed through the shopping district and entered the residential district. And he passed by the front of his house.

And when he came to the neighboring house of his childhood friend, he abruptly stopped.

He looked at the plate which he was used to seeing, on which was written "Shigure". Following that, he looked up at the room of Haruka, a girl whom he had been hanging out with since grade six.

Maybe it's because Haruka hadn't reached home yet that the room was dark.

Looking up at that,

"....."

Really, he had really never thought that things would come to this, he thought.

For a long time, the closest girl to him outside of his family was Haruka. And because she was too close to him, he had never thought about whether they would become lovers or not.

Despite that, vaguely, the other party could be Haruka perhaps, he had thought. Of course, it was not like he had thought of it at the conscious level with complete awareness, but he would have a faint thought that perhaps she might be the one.

But yet, just now,

"....."

He had kissed another girl.

Of course, his feelings for Himea were probably real. No, since he was after all still a brat in high school, he wouldn't really know an adult thing such as whether his feelings were real or not, but, after all the things that had happened one after another, the feelings towards her which were given birth inside of him were real.

That's why he had kissed her and had told her that he loved her without any regret, but.

"..... I have to tell this to Haruka."

He murmured softly.

As he did that, he could feel a surprisingly slight pain in the deeper recess of his heart.

As to what kind of feeling that was, he could not get a firm grasp of its nature for now.

No, it was a lie.

He knew.

But, how should he put this.

"..... it just means that life is not so simple."

If he were to imagine what kind of face Haruka would make when he told her. If he were to imagine her reaction when he told her.

What surfaced in his mind was only a picture of her laughing, *ah-haha*.

In front of Taito, she would always laugh cheerfully. Whatever happened, she would cheer him on.

And this time round as well, she would probably say things like *you've done it*, or *do your best*, or *I'll cheer you on* , right?

Or will she instead.

Will she instead be crying perhaps?

"....."

No, he wouldn't be so conceited as to think --- Haruka was definitely in love with him.

However, since that fateful day when he was knocked down by a truck, too many things had changed suddenly , and if he were to her all that, Haruka would definitely be at a loss as well, he thought.

He continued looking at the dark room of Haruka for a while, and then,

"....."

He started walking again.

And besides, right now, he had a ton of things he needed to do, so he decided to run away from that matter for a little while and stop thinking about it.

At any rate, his life was already an anomaly.

Demons and monsters were rampaging, it was as if he got caught up in the world of some manga.

And he couldn't get Haruka involved in this dangerous, abnormal world.

That's why.

"....."

That's why.

After passing by Haruka's house for about five, six minutes, he came to that house.

Before him, that house of that person who excels in all sports, academic results, is popular with girls, and on top of that, kicks demon and monster ass in the shadows --- the student council president with an extremely flashy profile, was but a normal looking detached home.

A small yard and a mortar wall.

A very ordinary 2 story house.

Taito looked at it intently.

Just like the room of Haruka, he could see no lights switched on in the house.

"..... but, he did say he's going home to sleep."

He grumbled as he went through the gate. He then passed through the short entrance, and pressed on the intercom.

A common sounding *Pinpon* resounded,

"....."

But there was no response.

Once again, he rang the bell.

"....."

Pinpon, Pinpon, Pinpon, Pin.....

And then, at that moment, from the intercom,

"..... stop that!"

Gekkou responded with an extremely annoyed voice.

On hearing that, *ah-haha, sorry for waking you up*, Taito was about to say, but before that,

"We don't need any preaching. We also don't need any canvassing. If you're delivering a parcel, treat it as if no one is around and deposit it into the mailbox. If you ring the intercom again and make up a ruckus and disturb my sleep, I'll kill you. That's all."

He said what he wanted and cut off the intercom.

"Hey, oiy Gekkou?"

Taito started, but since it was already cut off, his voice didn't reach him.

And then.

"..... well, I understand that you are sleepy, but do you do this every time a delivery man comes? That fella....."

While saying that, he pressed the intercom again. Once again, *Pinpon*, the bell sounded in the house, and following that,

"..... who is the one who wishes to die?"

Gekkou spoke.

Taito replied.

"It's me."

"Disappear."

"Erm, I have something to talk about."

"I don't."

"What does it have to do with whether you do or not?"

He tried saying, but,

"....."

A 'click' sounded and once again, the intercom was cut off. In response to that, Taito started,

"That bastard."

And just as he was about to ring the intercom again, suddenly, the door opened.

And from inside, the face of the aforementioned stuck-up student council president appeared. It seemed like he had slept in his clothes, seeing how his uniform was slightly wrinkled, and his usual stand-up collar that was always buttoned up all the way around his neck was half opened today.

He was clearly tired. Though it was rare that he has a half awake expression with half closed eyes, and bed hair .

Looking at his figure,

"Ah, I'm sorry, you were sleeping?"

Even though he already knew that, for now, that's what he chose to say, and in response to that, Gekkou glared at him sharply with his half opened eyes,

"..... come in."

He said.

On hearing that, Taito was slightly surprised,

"Is that ok?"

"If you're not coming in, then go home."

"Erm no, I'm coming in though."

With that, Taito entered Gekkou's house. The entrance was dark. As the sun had largely set outside, the house was dark.

In that darkness, without turning on the lights, Gekkou proceeded inwards.

Taito then took off his shoes,

"Sorry for bothering."

"You're really a bother."

"Don't say that ok? After all, it's your buddy from the student council that's coming here to hang out."

He said.

With that, Taito looked around him and then followed behind Gekkou.

Gekkou opened the door at the inner part of the corridor, and entered it. He then switched on the lights to that room.

It was a dining kitchen. It was not a spacious kitchen and at the front of the kitchen was a dining table. Gekkou then pointed his finger to one of the chairs placed beside the table,

"Sit."

He said. He then opened the fridge and took out two bottles of cola. He tossed one to Taito and opened the other one.

"....."

Taito caught the cola,

"Ah, thanks."

He said.

Of course, Gekkou just ignored him. With that, he took a seat and a drink from his cola bottle,

"..... damn. I'm still sleepy."

He said.

Seeing how truly tired he was from his face, Taito felt a little bad, he then looked around a few times and said.

"..... erm, where's your family?"

Gekkou then replied.

"Not around."

"Not around?"

"Yeah."

"In other words?"

"Dead. Hinata killed them."

"....."

Taito became at a loss for words. And then, he finally understood the reason why his face was full of hatred

when he was facing the monster called Hinata some time ago.

And also the reason behind his somewhat surprisingly audacious temperament.

"..... ah ~, I didn't know....."

But he was cut off by Gekkou,

"It was a long time ago. No need to worry about it."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"But still, I'm sorry."

"....."

On hearing that, Gekkou did not reply. He took another drink of his cola, and looked at him with his sleepy eyes.

And then suddenly,

"I know why you came."

He said.

On hearing that, Taito was surprised,

"Seriously?"

Gekkou then laughed cruelly, as if to mock him,

"After bringing that amount of trouble to me and Saitohimea, and if you still have a carefree attitude about it, that will just make you a piece of trash."

He said.

Taito then looked intently at Gekkou,

"..... yeah~"

He said. And then, with a somewhat self-deprecating smile,

"That's really the case right?"

"Yeah."

"..... since you've said that, then things became easier."

"It's because you're the one who's slow."

"..... haha. You're right."

After saying that, Taito unscrewed the cap of his cola bottle. And drank. The cola was a little too chilled and he felt a moment of brain-freeze.

"Can I sit?"

"Yeah."

Taito then put his cola on the table and sat down. Inside a normal kitchen of a normal detached home, and sitting opposite of the stuck-up student council president somehow made him feel a little out of place.

Looking intently at Gekkou, he said.

"Well, so as to speak, I'm not too sure where should I start from though....."

"Since an idiot doesn't even know why he was born in the first place."

"..... aah geez, let's not get started with that, shall we?"

Gekkou took another drink of his cola. Taito also took a drink. However, he felt so awkward that he could no longer taste the cola.

And then,

"Well but, there's one thing I'm most concerned about. That is, is Himea safe?"

That was the thing that was at the top of his mind.

While Gekkou managed to drive off the Tenma somehow, it doesn't mean that the Tenma won't come after her again, or maybe Gekkou merely staved them off temporarily.

Gekkou then said,

"I don't know much about the **<< Tenma >>**. The **<< Military >>** is investigating."

He answered rather seriously.

"Erm, then."

"Yeah. Whether they will attack Saitohimea again or whether they will come here again, I have no idea."

"Hey, then isn't that bad?"

"Yeah, it's bad. But, isn't that the reason why you came ?"

Gekkou said.

Then, Taito then said,

"Yeah."

And nodded.

"That's right. I want to acquire the power to protect her if something like that happens again."

"A small fry in his own small fry way, wants to struggle against futility?"

"Hey you, you really need to watch your tongue."

"I'm only speaking the truth."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah."

"I see. But I do want to struggle against futility ~"

Taito said.

On hearing that, Gekkou's sleepy half-opened eyes opened up a little,

"..... well, with that tenacious body of yours, it's not like there's no way at all."

After saying that, he stood up.

And then,

"Follow me. Let's first get back to the student council room."

"Right now?"

"Yeah. You want to train yourself up right?"

When he uttered the word 'training', Taito got slightly embarrassed,

"Yeah."

He nodded.

"Then, I will use a **<< Way >>** to connect you to such a place. Go there and don't come back for a while."

Gekkou told him.

"For a while, you say, about how long?"

"Now. If you want to know everything, go back home and ask your Mama."

"..... you're really a hateful fella you know ~"

"Haha."

Gekkou walked in the direction opposite the entrance. He's probably going back to his room. He's planning to return to his room and get back to the student council room via the **<< Way >>** that was connected to his room.

Taito followed along.

En route to there, there were a number of rooms, but as expected, there was no sign of anyone living in them.

The thing about his family getting killed by Hinata was really true.....

"....."

Really true.....

"....."

But, at that moment, Taito saw a room that had its door wide open.

A room that was made up of a bed, a bookshelf, and a desk.

On the bed was a overflowing number of plushies lined up, and the bookshelf was filled full with manga.

And hung on the wall, was a Miyasaka High sailor uniform, and below it, sprawled on the floor, were underwear that seemed to have been taken off hastily ---

"Hey!?"

Taito cried out without thinking.

Somehow, after realizing that he had seen an awfully adult scene, he cried out without thinking. And then,

"Huh? Eh? Hey, Gekkou?"

Gekkou turned around.

"What?"

"Erm, you know, could it be that you're."

"That's why I'm asking you what is it?"

"Are you living with a girl?"

He asked.

Gekkou looked intently at Taito and then he turned his gaze to face the room with the sprawled out underwear which Taito was looking at.

However, without looking the least bit flustered,

"Oh, you're talking about that room?"

He said.

Despite the fact that his same year school mate had caught him in a situation where he could be instantly expelled from the school if they knew of this, he had a relaxed expression.

"Y-you, you are really an adult with regards to those things huh."

Taito said.

However, with a perplexed face that said, *what the hell are you talking about*, Gekkou looked at him,

"..... haah."

He let out a sigh. And then, without bothering to explain anything, he started ascending the stairs in the middle of the corridor.

"You're not explaining that?"

Taito asked, but still, Gekkou did not reply.

"..... ah ~ but, it's that right? If that is a Miyasaka High's sailor uniform, that means you're living with one of our students right? Who is it? Do I know her....."

But, at that moment,

"Stop talking already....."

"No but."

"It's Mirai's room. She doesn't have a house in the human world, so I'm using that to rear her."

On hearing those words --- Taito started,

"You, are going out with Mir....."

"I'm going to kill you, you know?"

As Gekkou turned around,

"Kidding ~ But you know, I didn't expect that I can get through to you by engaging in high school student talk."

Taito smiled and in response to that, Gekkou seemed to want to say something, but,

"....."

After feeling it would become a troublesome thing, he sighed out again, and ignored Taito.

He was feeling really sleepy today. With that, he climbed up the stairs. While Taito followed after him,

"Hey."

"....."

"There's one more thing I wanted to ask."

"..... I'm already too tired to talk to you."

Taito smiled,

"But I'm going to ask anyway."

"Die."

"Haha."

And Taito asked,

"..... I've heard that Himea had made a huge sacrifice in order to revive me..... and because of that, today's incident took place..... what in the world, happened to Himea during the time when I was dead?"

On hearing those words, Gekkou turned around again, and showed him a face that said he didn't feel like talking to him anymore.

Then,

"..... did you hear that from Saitohimea?"

Taito shook his head.

"No, it was Himea's split personality who said that. A split personality that was supposed to protect Himea from the **<< Tenma >>** ....."

"Split personality?"

"Yeah. His name is Bahlskra though. Ah, when I say Bahlskra, I'm talking about Himea."

"..... Bahlskra is Saitohimea.....?"

He murmured softly.

On hearing that, Taito said,

"Oh, Gekkou didn't know?"

"..... I don't. That damn witch..... always hiding things from me....."

But Gekkou stopped in mid-sentence,

"..... but, it doesn't really matter probably. That will become known to me eventually when the ongoing investigation proceeds. I'm sending you off now and then getting some sleep."

"Hey answer my question duh. What in the world did Himea do to bring me back to life....."

But in response to that,

"The place where you're going is where you'll find out. So stop talking to me already."

As he said that, Gekkou quickly ascended the stairs. And entered the room that was just right beside the end of the stairs. That room appeared to be the room of Gekkou, with the exact same setup as the room he had seen across the **<< Way >>** from the student council room.

A room with only a bed and a desk.

Upon entering the room, Gekkou murmured.

"Open."

And a rift opened up in the center of the wall in the room. That rift was connected to the student council room. the messed up student council room that has yet to be repaired.

Gekkou entered the student council room, and then once again,

"Open."

He said.

This time round, inside the student council room, a **<< Way >>** that was different from the one that was connected to Gekkou's room opened.

Pointing at that,

"Here. This is the place that has what you are seeking."

Gekkou said.

Taito entered the student council room as well, and looked at this opened rift.

The place beyond the rift was a strange one.

No, a place that a **<< Way >>** connects to is always a strange one.

Taito looked at the strange place beyond the portal.

"....."

On the other side of the rift, was an incomprehensible place --- inside the darkness, was a prism of colors that he could not make out exactly what they were, and they were squirming and spiraling in the air in a dancing fashion.

Looking intently at that,

"..... is this place inhabitable by humans?"

On hearing Taito's question, Gekkou nodded.

"No problem. I've been there a few times."

"In other words, you've also trained there?"

"No, I've been a genius since birth."

"..... wow."

"However, for one like you, who is useless since birth, it's the perfect place."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Besides, the thing you wanted to know is inside there."

"The thing I wanted to know?"

In response to Taito's question, Gekkou nodded.

"The one that has taken Saitohimea's power away from her and brought you back to life resides in there."

He said.

On hearing that, Taito began,

"..... which means."

"For only one time, if you're willing to pay the price, you'll be granted with something that matches up to the price. That's why, you shall go there as well, and receive the power you want. This is the fastest way for trash to become strong."

He said.

Once again, Taito looked at the other side of the rift. However, the more he looked at the glittering rainbow colors, the more dazzling they became.

"..... so you're saying I'll acquire power by paying some price, that's what you're saying right?"

Gekkou nodded.

"That's right."

"No but, is that alright? That price, would be something awfully, terribly great right? After all, Himea had gotten to her current state because of that huh."

"Yeah."

"And yet, you're telling me to do it?"

On hearing his question, Gekkou smiled.

"Are you saying that you can't pay the same sacrifice as that woman?"

On hearing those words,

"..... no, I didn't say that though....."

Taito smiled as well.

And he looked intently at it again. He looked at that rift. He could see that there was some strange incomprehensible power squirming in a spiral, and he gazed into that portal,

"..... alright, I'll be going for a while."

"Right. Hurry up and go. I'll keep the **<< Way >>** open , when you get back, just say, *Close*, and it will."

"Got it."

After Taito's acknowledgement, Gekkou once again started back through the **<< Way >>** that was connected to his room.

"See you. As much as possible, don't die."

He said something like that, to which Taito smiled,

"Oh, it's unlike you to be worried about me."

As he said that, Gekkou made a *are you an idiot* face and said.

"If you die, there'll be no one to close the **<< Way >>** and when the **<< Military >>** sees it, they will call for an inquiry. It's just that I really hate that."

"I see ~"

"Now, quickly disappear. You're an eyesore."

"Alroight alroight. See you, and sorry for waking you up."

"You ought to be."

After saying that, *Close*, Gekkou uttered. Following that, the **<< Way >>** that was connecting the student council room to Gekkou's room closed, and his figure disappeared.

After Taito ascertained that,

"..... now."

He said. He cracked his head, stretched his arms and loosened his body to deal with any possible danger.

"Well, it'll be fine if it's the kind of danger that I can deal with, but you seldom get what you want right?"

Upon saying that strangely old catchphrase, he passed through the **<< Way >>**.

As he passed through the portal ---

Chapter 5 - Wish and Price

As he passed through the portal, the scenery of the place was even stranger than what he had seen from the student council room.

Where the sky was, there were squirming, shining waves of a prismatic spectrum resembling that of an aurora, which was lighting up this world, however, aside from that light, this world was dark.

That was the reason why, one could not say that the visibility here was extremely good.

He could only see up to ten meters ahead of him, and beyond that, everything was shrouded in darkness.

And the scenery that was visible to him was a strange one.

Before him, was a single paved path extending away from him, and to both the left and right side of the path, it ended in a cliff.

Taito took a peek down those cliffs, but there seemed to be no visible bottom at all, and in response,

"..... If I fall off here, I'd surely die."

He muttered.

No, he could not truly die unless he dies seven times within fifteen minutes --- as such a unique curse had been placed on him, he would not die even if he fell off only once, however, nevertheless, he had never thought of trying.

So he looked up again,

"..... Am I supposed to walk along this path?"

Even as he said that, as expected, no one answered him. Taito then let out a small sigh, and started walking.

Walking straight ahead, he proceeded along the path towards the darkness where the light could not reach.

As he did that, the scenery shifted. The squirming aurora in the dark sky started weaving. Like a bunch of wriggling earthworms, the prismatic spectrum aurora squirmed.

As he looked at that somehow it made him feel sick.

Clearly.

"....."

Clearly, this was a place not meant for humans to visit, and as he felt that, a sense of anxiety started welling up.

Abruptly, he looked over his shoulder to verify that the return way was still there. And as he did that, it appeared to him that he had walked some distance without realizing, and the **<< Way >>** that was connecting the student council room to this world, was quite a distance away.

However, after seeing that **<< Way >>**, he felt a little more assured. *It'll be fine. I can still go back.*

After ascertaining that, he faced forward again.

And then, at the instant he looked to the front again,

"Huh?"

He uttered.

The path that was extending before him seemed to be narrower than before, he thought.

"Erm, what's this? Was it like that before?"

He murmured. And then, he thought of comparing the width of the path behind him, so once again, he turned his head around, and after ascertaining the width of the path behind him, he turned back to the front,

"....."

This time, it was quite clear to him that the path had become narrower.

At the beginning, when Taito first saw the path, with his arms outstretched, he could lie down horizontally across the breadth of the path, but now, the path had narrowed to the point where it would be impossible to have two people passing by each other on the path.

As he realized that,

"..... What's this?"

Taito murmured.

"Could it be that each time I look back, the path becomes narrower?"

Even as he asked that, as expected, no one replied.

However, he started becoming unsettled again, and said to himself.

"..... I didn't hear of that though? Or is it that the training had already started ~, but even if this is so, I'm not really prepared for it, you know?"

He said, and of course, there was no response to that.

However, there was no way he could turn around again. Even though he didn't know whether the path had really become narrower as a result of him looking over his shoulder, in the case that it was really so, there was no way he could turn around again.

The path had probably narrowed twice by now, though with the current rate of narrowing, it could narrow once more, and in that next time, it was probable that the width of the path would be so narrow that only the body of a child could fit on it.

And if that were to happen,

"..... I'll definitely fall off."

As he muttered that, Taito once again looked down the cliffs. He looked into the seemingly bottomless, deep chasm. And he gulped.

"Anyway, I'll just proceed on. It'll be fine as long as I don't look back."

He said to himself.

And he started walking again. Even though he was not sure where he was heading towards, in any case for now, he walked along the path, heading straight ahead.

And following that, after walking for about fifteen minutes in the seemingly void space, a black lump appeared in the middle of the path.

As expected, because of the limited light, he could not tell what it was, but he could tell its size.

It was probably about the size of the jungle gym in the park.

A black lump that was the size of the jungle gym was on the path before him.

"What's that, I wonder."

Murmured Taito.

"Is that my destination?"

Even though he was unsure, he moved forward anyway. And as he got closer, he could make out the form of the black lump.

Initially, it looked like a mass of black charcoal. But, as he got closer, that black mass was more like the wings of a bat, and enclosed by those wings, was some unidentified thing that seemed to be curled up into a ball .

On seeing that, *Uweh ~, is this some kind of monster? A monster here?* Taito thought, unable to say anything.

If the thing before him was a hostile monster, he could not afford to make a sound and let his presence be noticed.

However, even so, it wouldn't do for him to escape,

"....."

Without saying anything, he moved forward.

He moved forward towards that bat-like creature.

And, in the midst of doing that,

[--- A human ---]

A voice resounded. While that voice came from the thing covered by the bat-like wings, it appeared to Taito as if the voice had sounded just in front of his ear, and it echoed in his head.

Taito then nodded,

"Erm..... sorry for intruding."

[--- Yeah, you are intruding. To keep a door open to this world..... the light is dazzling. The sounds are noisy. However ---]

The voice said.

[--- However, if you are here to pay a sacrifice, you are a guest ---]

And before Taito, the folded bat wings opened up a little. And from the little opening, something that resembled a face poked out.

Initially, Taito thought that it would be the face of a bat, but what came out was something different.

The face that poked out belonged to a human. No, it resembled the face of a human.

With purple skin, and a pair of eyes that seemed to be closed off by cross shapes carved out by a knife. However, those blocked eyes followed after Taito. And subsequently, with its mouth, as if it was a beast which had found its prey, it started laughing wildly. And in that mouth were sharp blades resembling that of shark-like teeth that definitely could not be clamped together.

Then that face said.

[--- Say your wish. This is Edelka. Let's have your dream manifest in accordance of the price you'll be paying. ---]

As it spoke, its teeth moved busily. In the space between those teeth, endless saliva flowed unceasingly. On seeing that, Taito spoke fearfully,

"..... I heard about this place from Gekkou."

[--- I'm not interested in others. I'm asking you for your desire, your despair. Now, speak. Speak and dive into the ring of the realm of the dead ---]

Its voice reverberated.

It reverberated loudly in his head.

In response to that,

"....."

Isn't this really bad? Taito started thinking. Of course, this was after all the one who had weakened Himea. He was of course fully aware that the creature here was a dangerous one but.

This was the one --- this was the monster who had taken away Himea's powers.

"..... To save someone like me."

As he thought about that, he started getting angry at himself, for getting scared silly just from seeing the monster before him.

He then took in a breath softly and looked intently at the monster.

"I've come to obtain power."

[--- Everyone says that ---]

"Eh? Is that so?"

[--- Yeah. And what is the power you desire ---]

On hearing that question, he started to answer.

The power he desired.

A power that can allow him to protect Himea from any attacking monster. Knowledge that can allow him to protect Himea from any kind of situation without losing his presence of mind.

I want to acquire the power that can allow me to protect her from even that thing called the Tenma, he wanted to say.

However, before he could say that, the monster before him spoke.

[--- The price is your life. The price encompasses everything you hold dear ---]

On hearing those words,

"Eh?"

Uttered Taito.

"Eh, wait a minute, My life? If I receive anything from you, I'll die?"

[--- That's right. Everyone who had come here died ---]

"Don't kid with me. Isn't that kind of terrible? If I die, I won't be able to protect....."

But, before he could finish, the bat wings started spreading open. And, there was nothing inside. Inside, with the same squirming prismatic spectrum of lines as the sky, the purple human-like face was floating. The face then said,

[--- No, you've already lost your life the moment you stepped into this place. You are fodder. Fodder fodder ---]

Its teeth rattled. *Gasha, gasha*, they rattled.

In response to that,

"..... Hey, hey hey hey, this is really bad....."

And at that moment, the face of the monster came attacking. Creating a series of iridescent afterimages like that of an aurora, it came flying into the center of his chest,

"..... gah, hah."

It passed through him.

Taito looked at his own chest. He looked at his chest that had a large gaping hole. His lungs, heart, and innards were probably devoured in their entirety.

Of course, since he was immortal, the hole in his chest started filling up gradually, but,

"..... cr... this isn't the time to be saying crappppppp!? "

Yelled Taito.

He turned around. He turned around to look for the monster face that had passed through his chest.

As he did that, the face was already right before him. It opened its mouth. It opened its mouth that was lined with shark-like teeth wide. On seeing that,

"Owah!?"

He bent down promptly and dodged it. And with that, he started running. He started making his way back along the path where he came from.

As he was running, he remembered the words of Gekkou just before he came here. He remembered the words of that idiot.

If he remembered correctly, this was what he said.

"As much as possible, don't die."

"Jeez, I'm going to die from this right!?"

Taito shrieked as he recalled the words of Gekkou.

"No, what's this? What the hell's this? This isn't about paying a price and receiving a power anymore right? That fella won't even listen to me right?"

As he said all that to himself in a moronic manner, he continued running desperately, exerting all his strength. As the path was narrow, if he were only to miss a step, he would tumble off into the bottom of the deep darkness, but, he couldn't afford to be concerned with that.

After all, the sound of the monster's teeth behind him was pressing closer. *Gasha, Gasha*, the sounds of the teeth were getting closer, closer ---

"..... There's really no end to this running....."

Taito muttered in a groaning tone.

He was already running at a speed that was impossible for a normal human being. Freely making use of the power conferred to him by Himea, his tendons were torn, repaired, torn, repaired for countless times, allowing him to run at a speed that was beyond the limits of a human.

However, he felt that there was no end to this.

Which means...?

"..... The exit is gone?"

As he was running with all his might, he looked ahead of him. But, he could not see the exit. Well, as he had walked quite a ways from the student council room, there might still be some distance from it, but in any case,

"..... There's no end to this."

He muttered.

Then, what should I do?

How should I act?

There wasn't much time for him to think. There was a limit to the number of times he can die. He can only return back to life six times from dying within a span of fifteen minutes. So, since he died once just now, the remaining number of times he could die was five.

To make this clear, if he were to face an overwhelmingly powerful monster in battle, he could

afford to die five, or six times, a factor which couldn't give him any assurance at all.

If he were to just let his guard down a little, or make a wrong choice, it could cause him to be killed tens of times within an instant.

That's why.

"..... Make a choice."

Taito muttered.

At this rate, would he be able to make it back to the student council room without getting killed for a total of seven times?

Or should he fight?

Thinking about that, he said.

"Of course the latter, What the hell did I come here for; To get stronger right? How can I get stronger if I keep on running? I can do it. I definitely can do it. Rather, it'll be terrible if I can't. In that case ---"

At that moment, he stopped, and turned around. And then,

"Let me kick your ass, bastard!!"

He yelled.

And before him.

The face that was full of teeth came closing in.

However, it was not like it was so fast that he could not react to it. Well of course. Even if it was fast to the point that it seemed like it was going to catch up to him despite the fact that he was running with all his might --- it didn't mean that it was going to catch up to him instantly.

With regards to the matter about dodging, if he thought about it, it was far easier than if it would be if this were a battle with an opponent who was armed with a pistol.

That's why the problem didn't lie there.

Right now, the problem that had appeared before him was not related to the matter of dodging.

More serious than that,

"..... what the hell is this!?"

Taito hollered as he looked at this newly appeared problem before him.

Right now, a really unthinkable thing had taken place before him. Probably as a result of him turning to face behind him and then turning back to face the front, the path, the width of the path, had become as narrow as that of a balancing beam.

"Don't shit around with me, how do you expect me to fight under such....."

Of course, the enemy wouldn't care about that and came devouring him. On seeing that,

"Crap."

He groaned, and dodged. Just as one would think, he missed his footing. As the important place between his

legs was in danger of getting struck by the path that was as narrow as a balancing beam, he frantically used his hands to break his fall.

And then, in a voice that was shaking in fear,

"..... t-that was dangerous..... if I had hit my nether region with that kind of force just now, I'd definitely die once....."

He rambled something foolish.

He then immediately stood up. Following that, he looked up at the face of the monster that was swirling in the sky.

"Now."

He started.

"Do I have to defeat that, or....."

He then lowered his gaze, and looked intently at the aurora like spectrum of seven colors that was inside those black wings on the other side of the path,

"Or do I have to defeat the thing there....."

He finished.

Whichever it was, there was only one weapon that was available to him. And it was also given to him by Himea.

He clenched his right fist. He could then feel his fist getting hot.

This was the only weapon he possessed.

At that moment, he remembered the words of Himea when he first got this power. If he remembered correctly, it was when he was yelling from the heat which was given off by the white flames that had suddenly engulfed his right arm, when Himea had said.

"It's hot of course. They are flames from the ***Martes*** *(Tenkai)* ***Plane****. If anything other than the* ***Martes*** *(Tenma)* ***Devil*** *touches this* ***Gouka****, it will vaporize in an instant."*

But, that was a different Tenma from the one that had attacked Himea, it seems. It was somewhat confusing, but, at any rate, this should be a tremendously powerful weapon.

That's why he should be able to do something about that monster with this power.

"....."

He looked up at the sky again. The monster face looked down at him --- rather, at his right arm where the white flames had been ignited; acting cautiously against the flames, it did not attack.

On seeing that,

"Seems like this will be effective?"

A small smile surfaced on Taito's face.

And he raised his arm. At that point in time, the entire length of his arm from his elbow to his fist was already burning with the white flames. Of course, his right arm hurt from the burning flames, an intense amount of pain. As a result, he wanted to release the flames and end everything; however, things weren't as simple as that for him.

The reason was because, the instant he uses the magical flames of the **Tenma Martes Devil**, there will be a backlash that will burn half of his body into nothingness.

For a human, this means death. For him, this means the number of times he can die gets reduced by one.

In exchange for this tremendously powerful attack, a price of getting his lives reduced by one came along with it.

"Well, since I can die five more times, there's plenty left....."

But still, even if that's the case, he couldn't afford to attack carelessly.

That's why he was unsure of which to attack first.

Face or body?

Of course, since the face was flying in circles in the sky , he didn't think he would be able to hit it until he strikes it when it comes attacking.

"Then, shall I just blast the body?"

Upon saying that, he looked in front, and as if reacting to what he had said, the bat wings of the body spread.

Looking at that,

"..... Shit. If it flies, I won't be able to hit....."

He frantically drew his right arm back, and prepared to launch the flames of the **Martes Devil**[Tenma].

"I won't let you escape."

Upon saying that, as he was about to fling his fist forward,

"Seems like I can't."

He gave up. The body of the enemy took off to the sky faster than he had expected, and he no longer had the confidence that he could hit it.

Taito looked up at the dark sky,

"It's not fair that you can fly!"

He yelled, but of course, the monster didn't descend down to answer him.

"Now, this becomes training for me to hit it right?"

While saying that, he looked at the narrow path, which was lacking in footing area that he was standing on.

"Somehow, it looks like a Shaolin training ground I saw on TV a long time ago....."

Then, once again, he looked up at the sky where his enemies were. Just like before, the face and body were flying around in the sky and made no attempt to attack him.

If he has to do something about them, he can really only aim to throw his flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil** at them , it seems.

"If you have no intention to fight, I'm also fine with that though?"

He tried saying, but as expected, the monster did not reply. Seems like it was terribly afraid of the flames that were residing in his hand ---

"....."

He thought, however, it didn't seem to be the case as well.

He tried to follow the line of sight of the face that was hovering in the sky. Initially, he thought that the face was looking at his right arm.

However, it seems like that was not the case, and the monster's line of sight was ---

"..... Hey, that fella isn't looking at me?"

Said Taito.

"Then, what is it looking at?"

He followed the line of sight of the monster.

Upon doing that, he realized that the gaze of the monster was a place that was further right of his right arm.

Further behind.

"Eh?"

Taito wanted to turn around, however.

"Crap. If I turn around, the path is going to get narrower."

He recalled just as he was on the verge of turning around. If the path narrowed even further, there would probably be nowhere left to stand. That would be terrible .

That's why he did not turn around.

However,

"....."

He could feel the presence of something.

It was something with an overwhelming presence.

Even for a normal person who has done karate but never received any special training, for a mere human like Taito, he could feel an unpleasant atmosphere.

Something was behind his right side.

No, he could feel something climbing up below his right side.

He could feel something climbing up from the bottom of the bottomless darkness.

On realizing that,

"..... uweh uweh, this is a joke right? The one above is not the last boss?"

He said. If this were a game, and the player gets assaulted by a series of bosses right at the start, it would have been classified as a crappy game and gotten sold to a second hand shop, but,

"..... This most terrible thing that is happening is reality though....."

Even as he groaned, he was once again pressed to make a choice.

Should he braced himself for the narrowing of the path and turned around, or should he first deal with the monster that had retreated to the sky without looking back ---

But, at that moment, something touched him from behind.

"Hey, isn't it already behind me!?"

He yelled.

And then, he decided to turn around. Even if the path was going to become narrower, he couldn't afford not to turn back and get killed as a result.

That's why he turned around.

And then, right before him,

"Not there!?"

There was nothing right before him.

Instead, that something that was at the center of his back climbed up to the back of his neck.

"Whoa, it was attached to my back!?"

Feeling as if a gigantic leech was slithering on him, Taito felt like crying. He was fed up with himself for not being able to do anything as he was getting toyed with.

However, the situation in which that something was attached to his back was not a bad one.

The reason was because, the instant he uses the flames of the **Martes Devil**, his body will be blown off. In other words, if the enemy is attached to him, then he can't miss . He can just blast it away together with his own body.

That's why, as he was feeling disgusted with the creeping feeling on his back, a smile floated on his face.

And then,

"..... Die!"

He started flinging his right arm backwards, to fire off the flames of the **Martes Devil**.

However,

"You can't do that, Kurogane-kun. Right here, in this world of mine. You can't wield that dangerous thing."

A woman's voice resounded in his ear. With that, the leech like creeping feeling extended from his neck to his shoulder, from his shoulder to his right arm, and revealed itself.

However, that wasn't a leech, but the wet hand of a woman. Extremely white fingers on that white hand.

The fingers, in a stroking motion, moved across Taito's arm, and then it caught hold of him. Upon doing that, from the white skin of that hand, a transparent wet liquid was secreted and it extinguished the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil**.

Rather, it seemed like his power was sealed.

On seeing that,

"....."

Taito was at a loss for words. His only trump card, the flames of the **Martes Tenma Devil**, was readily extinguished, and as a result, he no longer had any other means of attack.

On top of that, the voice of the woman behind him had said that this world belonged to her.

In other words, the thing that was flying in the sky was not the master of this world.

And as the true master had appeared, it stopped its attacks.

As the monster with the real power had appeared, it stopped its attacks.

Taito then said,

"..... Is it my loss?"

The woman's voice then replied,

"That's right. But I have no intention of fighting you though....."

It was a really gentle, beautiful voice, a voice that didn't seem to belong to a monster. The voice of a woman, that made him want to turn around to ascertain it.

But Taito could not turn around.

No, he already knew it.

The thing behind him was truly the master of this world, the one who ruled over everything in this world.

Perhaps, she's a god or something, he thought.

She possessed an amount of power that was so great that Taito could feel a sense of fear and awe from her.

Taito said something.

With a trembling voice,

"..... A-are you going to kill me?"

The woman smiled.

"No. You're after all a guest, I won't kill you."

"B-but, the ones above attacked me, you know?"

As Taito said that, the finger which had extinguished the flames on his arm pointed to the sky.

"That thing?"

"Yeah."

"It's alright. That thing there can't do anything. He wanted to become a god like me, so I gave him the power , but as a result of being unable to withstand the might of the power, he became broken. And everyday, he tries to mimic me in conversing with the visitors. What a bother. "

She said.

Taito then looked up at the sky. He looked at the figure of the monster face that had stopped moving and was looking down at them in fear.

And then the woman's voice said,

"He offered the lives of his entire kingdom, but in the end, he could not withstand the might of the power given to him, a truly bothersome story, the lives of

millions of innocent people disappeared just like that, ah-hahahahahahahahahahahaha."

She laughed out.

A beautiful, cheerful, and delighted laugh.

Then,

"Now, Kurogane-kun, what will you offer, I wonder? Tell me what you want. And I'll choose and take away an equivalent compensation from you."

Upon saying that, the finger that was pointing to the sky turned towards him. It then touched his chest. Following that, the finger entered his chest,

"Now, speak up. I'll grant you your wish. Now, speak up. I'll grant you your wish. I'll grant you your filthy desire. Now, now ---"

She said.

The voice of the woman said.

In a stirring motion, the hand invaded Taito's chest.

Then,

"Now, let's go through the realm of the dead together ---"

She said.

However,

"....."

Taito could not answer.

No, there was no way he could answer.

After seeing that ugly monster that was flying in the sky, there was no way he could answer that easily.

And once again, he looked up at the monster in the sky.

Like Taito, he was formerly a visitor here. And he had asked for power, a great amount of power.

And the result was,

"..... That."

Muttered Taito.

No, maybe that fella was satisfied with becoming that thing perhaps; however, no matter how he looked at it, Taito could not see that he was satisfied with acquiring the power he had desired.

On top of that, according to the woman's words, she granted him the power he desired, and in exchange, she took the compensation she wanted.

Without knowing what the price he needed to pay was , she just took it from him.

And because of that, millions of people had died.

"....."

No, since Taito didn't know whether the fella above was formerly a human or not, he wouldn't know whether those who had died were humans or not, but in any case, the price he had paid was a terribly huge one.

On realizing that, Taito could no longer speak.

If he carelessly speaks a wish, some terribly thing might happen, he thought.

She might just take away an important thing from him on her own, he thought.

Taito then pondered.

He started pondering on the words she said again.

"Now, Kurogane-kun, what will you offer, I wonder? Tell me what you want. And I'll choose and take away an equivalent compensation from you."

An equivalent compensation --- she had said.

An equivalent compensation in exchange for what Taito desired, what would that be? That was the question .

He came here to seek power.

A power that can protect Himea.

A power that can protect Himea from any kind of enemy.

He was seeking to acquire power and knowledge that can protect Himea from a monster like the Tenma.

He came here with that kind of thought.

However, if he were to say that, what in the world would she take away?

Besides, do I have the capacity to withstand that kind of power?

That monster flying in the sky was broken as a result of acquiring too much power. But yet, the price was paid. What it meant was that he had gotten the worst possible result.

But, is my wish also.....

"....."

Taito thought.

Was his wish also one that would bring him the same kind of results? He thought.

Himea said this.

"The power that can exorcise the Tenma should not exist in this world....."

She said something like that.

In other words, the power that could deal with the Tenma would be some incredibly tremendous power.

On top of that, what Taito had felt from the Tenma at the school was at the same intimidating level of power as the woman who was laughing delightedly behind him.

An immense amount of power which he had never even felt from the **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** Himea, nor from the Hinata who had come attacking them with his demons.

If he were to just ask for the power that will enable him to drive away an incredibly mighty monster like the Tenma, what kind of compensation will this woman take away from him?

"....."

Taito was unable to imagine it.

No, he didn't possess something of value enough to match that kind of power.

That's why,

"I....."

As he opened his mouth,

"Are you so scared that you want to run away?"

The woman spoke, as if she had seen through his thoughts.

"Ah-hahaha, for a human, you are pretty wise. That's the right choice. This is a place that should be out of bounds to humans. This is the netherworld that living beings should not attempt to go through. But you are wise enough to have avoided it. But, I'll tell you something good."

Her finger left his chest, and this time round came towards his face. Moving upwards, the human index finger stretched out, and touched Taito's head.

In that instant, for some reason, his vision was covered in darkness. Then, in that darkness, another image surfaced.

"What?"

As Taito muttered, the image started moving by itself. Like playing back an old video tape, the image that was hazy, and filled with noise, moved in the darkness.

"....."

In that image, was the same strange place as the one Taito was in right now.

A dark sky filled with a swirling aurora of prismatic colors.

A single path that extended out.

Three people were walking on that path. In that group of people, was a pair of man and woman wearing Miyasaka High uniforms, and also,

"..... Himea!?"

Shouted Taito.

But the image moved on its own. Unmindful of Taito's voice, the image moved.

Himea was carrying Taito's head. Carefully, affectionately, she was carrying Taito's head.

And she was looking up at him. With a face that was on the verge of tears, she was looking up towards here.

Following that, something that seemed to be looking down at Himea said.

"Hey hey, you're a **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**? What a surprisingly big shot that has come. Since today's sky is beautiful, I thought I'm going to have a treat, and so this is it."

The voice of the same woman behind Taito now spoke. And then, in Taito's field of vision, a forked tongue appeared. A slurping sound subsequently followed.

Himea looked up towards here and asked.

"..... Are you the mistress of this place?"

"That's right, **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**. I'm the Mistress of this place called Edelka."

"I've heard that you can grant wishes."

"That's right. I can grant it to you, only once though."

"Any wish?"

"Yes, any wish as long as you can pay an equivalent price. But, what is the thing that a **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** cannot achieve by herself, I wonder. I can't imagine what that will be. A wish desired by a **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** who can use all magic . Ah, ah, today will be certainly become an important day ."

Then, in the image, a white hand appeared, an eerie white hand. That hand pierced through Himea's chest.

But she didn't resist.

"What's your wish?"

Himea looked straight ahead, up at her,

"I want you to return him..... return Taito back to life."

The line of vision shifted. The image was focused on the head of Taito that Himea was carrying.

Then,

"..... Resurrection is not cheap."

She said.

"I know."

Himea acknowledged.

"Even for the resurrection of a human you know? To call the life of a mere human back will require a huge price as well."

"Yeah."

"Ah-haha, you didn't hesitate. Perhaps, that life is a very important one?"

As she asked, the image shifted back to Himea. The image of Himea's beautiful face. Long lavender colored

hair, and a pair of strong-willed, mischievous, deep crimson eyes. Those eyes were filled with happiness. With a joyful face, she smiled.

And she said.

She answered the question asked by the Mistress of Edelka.

"Yeah. He's important to me."

She said readily.

"I see, then, alright. Normally, I won't do this kind of verification, but to think that a **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer Vampire >>** wants to revive a human, could this be a trap? I wondered and asked without thinking. Well then, let's call him back, the soul of that human --- and in exchange. "

At that point, the image shifted a little. The Mistress of Edelka half-shut her eyes and because of that, the image's size decreased by half.

And the voice then said.

"..... I shall have you pay the price....."

Instantly.

Himea's face contorted in pain. The white hand that was inside her pulled something out. Something that was shining brightly; something very important to Himea.

But her gaze was soft with joy. Even as she was probably experiencing a great amount of pain, she was gazing gently at the head of Taito that she was holding in her arms.

"Now, let's put this through the wheel of the realm of the dead, on one side of the balance, as the equivalent price."

The woman's voice said.

And at that moment.

Suddenly,

"....."

The image disappeared.

Taito's vision returned and he returned to the current world.

The place he was at was the wide path that Gekkou and Himea were at, but a path that was the width of a balancing beam.

In the sky, a monster with bat-like wings was hovering , and the woman called the Mistress of Edelka, with the forked tongue like that of a snake, as if to grab hold of him, came embracing him from behind.

"....."

However, nothing mattered to him.

He was in too much shock from what he had just seen from the image just now.

He had seen how Himea, without a single moment of hesitation, acted to bring him back to life.

There was no way that, as a highly intelligent **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**, she would not know how great a sacrifice she had to make to bring him back to life.

No, the truth was, when she was asked about how great the sacrifice would be, she had said that she knew.

But yet, all this while, she merely continued smiling. She never once showed a moment of hesitation.

After having seen that,

"..... You showed me this..... to tell me, who has hesitated, that I'm a fool?"

Said Taito.

He said to the Mistress of Edelka who was behind him.

And she replied,

"No. I was showing how foolish that **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>** was to revive you."

On hearing those words,

"Ah?"

Taito said.

"You better watch your words. Who's the fool?"

"That foolish **<< Most Ancient Sorcerer >>**[Vampire]."

"..... don't shit with me, damn you. She..... Himea is no fool."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Then, prove it to me."

Said the Mistress of Edelka.

"Tell me that you're willing to give up everything to protect her. If you do that, I shall take away an equivalent compensation from you."

She said.

Even though he had yet to say anything about his wish , she had completely seen through him.

However,

"....."

As expected, Taito could not answer.

No, it would be easy for him to say that he wanted power to kick the Tenma's ass. After having seen what Himea had done, there was no way he could just run away to a safe haven all by himself.

However, is it right to seek power here? He could no longer tell.

If say, he was to seek power.

If he were to easily seek power here, he would have to pay an equivalent price. But what would that price be?

Something precious to me.

Something as huge as the power to defeat the Tenma.

Won't that be Himea?

He thought.

Then, if he were to seek power here, there was a possibility that the price would extend to Himea. On top of that, there was also the possibility that, after going through the trouble of paying the price and causing

trouble to Himea, with the power to kick the Tenma's ass , he might not be able to withstand it and end up like the broken monster flying in the sky at the end of the day.

That would be terrible.

If he were to move without thinking, and not get the result he wanted, it would be a terrible thing.

That's why he was considering. He was considering what kind of power he should ask for, what kind of deal he should make with this monster.

Then,

"..... I never thought about breezing through and getting strong all of a sudden."

He said.

"It was the same with karate, as I thought, it's better to struggle and train, and get stronger through my own effort; it will be more gratifying that way."

He said.

The Mistress of Edelka, in response to that,

"Are you going to go on? I have no intention of talking with you though."

"Yeah, I guess."

"Right."

"Then, I'll speak my wish."

"Oh, you're going for a wish after all?"

"Yeah."

"Ah-hahahaha, humans are foolish after all."

The woman's voice said.

"Alright. Then, speak."

On hearing those words,

"....."

Taito took a small breath. He had never thought that he would be this nervous in just saying out his wish.

But he had decided.

Like Himea. No, he might not be able to pay as great a price as what Himea had paid, but still, he had decided.

And he said.

"..... I'm not going to ask you for any power. I will do something about attaining the power I need, so tell me the places where I can get that power."

"....."

"Tell me the places where I can acquire power through hard work, and become stronger, allowing me to stand beside Saitohimea, the **<< Most Ancient Vampire Sorcerer >>**."

He said.

The voice of the woman, the Mistress of Edelka, replied.

"Is that your wish?"

"Yeah."

"Alright. I shall grant you that."

"Really?"

"Yes. But, if you think that the price for that wish is cheap, then you're making a big mistake."

"Yeah."

"Ah-hahaha. Even if you're regretting it, it's too late."

Upon saying that, the white hand squirmed before Taito's eyes. Her fingers pierced into Taito's chest. From his body, he could feel his heart getting gripped in a crushing manner.

He wanted to cry out involuntarily, but no voice sounded.

Only the woman's laughter reverberated. Only a joyous laughter reverberated.

"Now, I shall take away your precious thing. I shall take away a precious thing of yours that is equivalent to the value of your wish. *Why did I do a thing like this? Why did I throw away something important to me that readily?* Those screams, those cries of anguish shall become my food. Now, let's put your precious thing through the wheel of the realm of the dead, on one side of the balance , as the equivalent price."

And then, the woman's hand pulled out something from Taito's chest. He didn't know what that was. What was the thing that was important to him?

What was the most important thing to him? Even he himself did not know.

But, he lost something.

He lost something important.

And in exchange for that, words surfaced in his mind. Large number of words surfaced. Words he did not recognize.

Strange words that were neither alphabets, Hangul, and of course not Japanese as well.

However, for some reason, Taito understood them.

What was written was a number of location names.

A place where Taito could contract a magical being.

A place where Taito could learn a hidden magic.

A place where Taito could find a hidden weapon.

Thousands of such locations were forced into Taito's head.

Of course, he did not know how those locations were pronounced, nor have he heard of those places, however, for some reason, he knew how to get to them. If he asked Gekkou, it would probably be easy for him to connect to those places by opening a **<< Way >>** from the student council room.

However, upon realizing that, Taito became somewhat afraid.

The reason was because of the **<< Military >>**.

The **<< Military >>** that had created Miyasaka High and put up a barrier to prevent other organizations from discovering the **<< Holy Ground >>**, has been all this while searching for the knowledge that Taito was holding now.

By using the **<< Holy Ground >>**, won't they be able to get hold of some useful, powerful curses, magic, or weapons?

They have been searching for a long time.

For decades, they have used the lives of student council presidents, including Gekkou, to search for these things.

But yet, all these places were within the grasp of Taito.

For a price he had paid, he was given the locations of these places.

It was an incredibly huge wish.

It was a wish that was far larger than what he had imagined.

Shivering in fear.

At the humongous power that he had gotten hold of.

And, as to the price he had paid to attain this,

"..... what in the world did I lose?"

He asked.

However, in response to that, *ah-haha*, the woman laughed again.

"Ascertain it with your own eyes. And then holler. Scream in despair, with a voice that can reach my ears."

"W-Wait, I....."

"Now, go back. There's no longer any reason for you to be here."

"Wait."

"I told you to go back to your own world."

In the instant she said that.

Taito's body was flung off. The scenery changed, his body flew, high in the air, and at the same time he experienced that, before he knew it, he was back in the student council room, with his back slamming into a locker behind him.

He looked up. He looked intently across the rift on the wall of the student council room, at the place where an aurora-like thing was squirming.

His body could not move. Rather, a number of his bones were broken from the impact of hitting the locker.

His regeneration started.

He had probably died once from that.

That meant that he could only die four more times.

"..... well, since I've returned here, I probably won't die anymore."

Upon saying that, he looked around. The student council room was still in its former state of shambles, yet to be restored.

His bones regenerated, and he could move again. He forced his body that was sunken into the locker up and stood up.

He flexed his shoulders and arms.

"Hah, I'm so tired."

He sighed out.

He then faced the **<< Way >>** before him,

"Close."

He uttered. He closed the **<< Way >>** to the world in which an incomprehensible monster resided.

While gazing at that,

"..... Gekkou that bastard, I didn't undergo any training at all."

He said in a tired voice.

However, he didn't come back empty-handed. What he had attained was really something incredible,

"It was not a worthless trip though."

While saying that, he looked out through the window. It was already dark outside. Well, when he came back to the student council room it was already evening, so it wasn't surprising that it was already dark outside.

"What's the time now?"

Taito looked at the clock hanging on the wall of the student council room.

The time now was ---

"....."

The time now was half past eleven in the night.

On seeing that,

"Huh, how come?"

Taito exclaimed without thinking.

"No no, isn't this strange? When I came here, it was around five right? But yet, why is it near midnight now?"

Even as he asked, no one replied, and so he thought. Probably,

"..... The time flow there is different from here? But in the first place, is today still today? Don't tell me like the story of Urashima Tarou, a hundred years has already gone by? Please, anything but that."

While saying that, *it's possible*, he thought. The Mistress of Edelka had taken away something from Taito . She took away something important to him. And it was not impossible that what she took away from him was time.

So as to speak, if this were really the case, like what happened to Urashima Tarou, he would really rave and scream in anguish, and without a doubt, that monster would gladly devour it.

That's why, with his heart racing, he took out his cellphone from his pocket. He flipped it open, and looked at the standby display. On the display was a picture of the guitar used by a rock musician he likes, and on that guitar, the date and time were shown.

Looking at that,

"..... Ah, it's alright."

He breathed a sigh of relief.

Even though his cellphone was with him in the place known as Edelka, the time on his cellphone was the same as that on the clock, running towards twelve o'clock, and consequently, he realized that only the time period his body had experienced was abnormal.

"..... Jeez, what in the world was that place?"

He pondered but no matter how he pondered, there was no way he would gain insight into it. He had spent

time in a world that was beyond his knowledge and common sense, and further thinking would just be a waste of time.

That's why, right now, the thing he was most worried about was,

"....."

He looked at his own body.

He tried knocking a few times on his chest, at the place where the Mistress of Edelka had inserted her fingers.

Then,

"..... What the hell did I lose? That's the problem."

He thought.

That was the real issue at hand. He did not have a grasp of what he had lost.

"....."

What in the world did the Mistress of Edelka take away from me?

"If I don't know that, I can't go hollering right..... don't tell me something happened to Himea gain?"

He said.

He then turned to face the school premises where the science room was. Right now, Himea was living in a forbidden space in the inner part of the science room.

"..... Well then, let me go take a look at her."

For a guy to visit a girl's room at this time of the night, he got the feeling that something really bad will happen, but well,

"I'm really worried though."

He started walking. And then, at the moment he was about to leave the student council room,

"Ah, crap, I didn't call back to let my folks know that I would be busy with student council work, jeez, they're going to get mad....."

And he once again took out his cellphone.

At that moment.

His cellphone started to vibrate.

"Crap, my folks?"

Taito became a little nervous.

Recently, thanks to Gekkou making full use of him, he had been getting home late. Because of that, his mother wasn't too happy, *let's talk to your Dad about this* --- it somehow came to that.

"Please spare me. It's not my fault, so go complain to Gekkou ~"

He flipped open his cellphone as he said that.

However, what was displayed on the screen was not his home number.

What was currently displayed were the words,

"Haruka's House"

"Huh? Haruka? At this hour?"

Taito murmured.

He then suddenly remembered that. *Ah ~ shit, I have to tell Haruka about that*, he thought.

About Himea.

He had to tell her about them, about him and Himea going out, as a couple.

"..... I-I guess not today. I'm also a little tired..... tomorrow, I'll probably call in sick tomorrow, so I'll go to Haruka's house and tell her about it."

While saying that, he looked intently at the vibrating phone in his hand.

For some reason, he felt like weeping at the thought of picking up the phone, but at the same time, he didn't like pretending that he wasn't around,

"Ah ~"

Taito said.

With that, he slowly put his thumb on the button to receive the call,

"....."

And pressed.

Then,

"Ah - hello, Haruka? What's up?"

Said Taito.

However.

"....."

The voice on the other side of the phone did not belong to Haruka. No, it was a voice that sounded a little like Haruka, but yet, it was a little different.

Stuttering, a voice that was on the verge of tears.

The voice said.

"Taito-kun?"

Taito then said,

"Ah, eh..... erm..... Aunt Shigure?"

The owner of that voice on the phone was the mother of Haruka.

"What's wrong, at this hour?"

Taito asked and Haruka's mother spoke, with a depressed voice for some reason. Haruka's mother, who was no less cheerful than Haruka, always showing her smiling side, was speaking in a strangely urgent voice,

"Erm Taito, is Haruka with you now?"

Taito then replied.

"Eh, no, she's not with me though."

"Please don't lie to me. I won't get angry even if you're together. If its Taito-kun, I won't get angry no matter what happens, so please don't lie to me."

She said something incomprehensible. Without asking him anything, she said in a reproachful voice.

"I haven't been able to contact you till now, you're together right? That's how it was right?"

She said in a desperate sounding voice.

That's why,

"..... Wait, Auntie, what're you saying? I don't really quite comprehend the situation..... what in the world has happened?"

He asked.

On hearing that, Haruka's mother replied.

With a tearful voice.

With a shaking voice,

"..... Haruka has not come home. It's already this late, but yet, I can't reach her on the phone."

Taito looked at the time. He looked at the time displayed on his cellphone.

The display showed that it was already nearing twelve midnight.

He knew full well that Haruka won't be loitering outside at this kind of time.

Her curfew starts at eight thirty, if her club activities go past that, she'll definitely call home to tell her folks.

And the only place where she would hang out after curfew hours would be Taito's house.

He had also never felt that she was unhappy about the need to keep to her curfew.

She would smile every day.

She loves her family and would always say, *The snacks my Mom makes are really tasty; one day, I want to become a mother who can make such tasty snacks for my children*.

"....."

But yet, that same Haruka had yet to reach home.

"..... Did... , did something happen to Haruka?"

Taito asked.

However,

"I don't know."

Haruka's mother said.

"Just now, the police came, and asked me to give a call to those who might have a clue, so that's why I'm calling you now....."

Police --- when Taito heard the word, he felt so shocked that his heart almost stopped.

There was a possibility that Haruka might have gotten embroiled in something serious.

An accident? Kidnapping? Whichever it might be, he did not know, but there was the possibility that Haruka got caught up in something serious.

On hearing that,

"....."

He remembered Haruka's smiling face today at school.

"....."

Taito could not move. His phone almost dropped from his hand.

His heart raced.

His heart raced so much that he felt nauseous.

His heart rate accelerated, as if it were desperately attempting to replace a lost fragment, an important lost fragment that must not be lost, from his heart.

Something important.

Without his realization, he lost something important to him.

"....."

Then, Taito looked at the white concrete wall.

His eyes widened.

His eyes widened to the point that they could widen no more.

At that moment.

"..... Taito-kun?"

"....."

"Taito-kun, are you ok?"

"..... ah, no..... I'll be there right away."

"..... then, Haruka is really not with you?"

When Haruka's mother said that, her voice was almost inaudible, seemingly having lost her strength.

"I'm sorry."

Taito apologized.

"I'm sorry for not staying together with her. But I'll ask around as well."

"....."

"I'll be right there."

After saying that, he hung up.

And once again, he looked at the white concrete wall.

He looked at the white concrete wall that was connected to a strange place called Edelka a while ago.

Then,

"Don't tell me..... don't tell me you took Haruka away? "

He muttered. With that, he broke into a run, and sent a kick flying into the concrete wall. Of course, even if he did that, the **<< Way >>** wouldn't open again, but yet he kicked into the concrete wall, and hollered.

"Don't shit with me!! Don't shit with me!! Why....."

Why did such a thing happen, he wanted to say but he stopped.

Since there was no reason for him to holler, he stopped .

Once again, he flipped open his cellphone. In his contact book, he scrolled to the entry, 'Annoying Idiot Kurenai Gekkou', and pressed. However, without ringing,

"This is a mailbox service....."

"That bastard, he turned it off!"

He yelled, and ran. He flew out of the student council room, dashed down the stairs, and ran out of the school.

He was heading in the direction of Gekkou's house.

One more time.

"I'm going back to that place one more time....."

I will get Haruka back.

I will get Haruka back from that monster.

I will get her back from this foolish abnormal world which does not involve her.

For that reason.

"....."

In order to return her to this world again,

"This time round, I'm fine even if the price is my life. So....."

Taito thought.

Prologue - --- The School Road of Spiriting Away

Morning.

When he awoke, the same routine day would start.

As he would have been playing games late into the night, it would be a little tough to get up and, "*Geez, feel like skipping school today*", he would say.

But somehow, he would struggle up, and then, his neighboring childhood friend Haruka would come wake him up, "*Now now Taito, are you still sleeping ~?*", she would say and, "*Shut up shut up*", he would reply.

And while half-awake, "*Damn, this sucks*", he would say and somehow go to school.

Day after day, unchanging.

And he would continue to spend those ordinary days blandly, he had thought.

With nothing out of the ordinary, an unchanging school life.

Speaking of that, previously, there was a time when he had an exchange with Haruka that went along like this.

Taito would say. "*I'm so ordinary*", and as if she was disagreeing with something that was aimed at herself, "*No way*", she would say, "*No no, I am ordinary isn't it?*", he would return, "*No, you're not*", "*Yes, I am*" --- such idiotic exchanges would carry on, and she would then say,

"Alright. Well then, isn't it fine the way it is, to be ordinary that is? It's the best thing that one can wish for to be able to laugh and enjoy a peaceful everyday."

She would say.

"....."

Taito recalled those words and her face when she said them. He thought of the smiling face that would gaze at him in a gentle manner.

No, the face he recalled was always the one she had, always smiling in a gentle manner.

Ever since she had moved in beside him during grade six, they had always been together. For some reason, whatever it was, they would be together.

Laughing together, crying together, having fights with each other; whatever happened, she would always have that gentle smiling face.

They would often be mistaken as siblings and, when he refuted it by saying *"This fella ain't my little sister"*, *"Eh ~, aren't you the little brother instead ~"*, she would reply as she smiled.

On hearing that, Taito would smile as well.

"....."

And he thought that days like those would continue on.

When he awaken in the morning, the early bird Haruka would be waiting outside and call out, *"Time to go to school"*.

"....."

And at that moment, Taito opened his eyes.

With that, he got up from his bed and looked around him.

He was in his room.

Florescent lamp covered by a round lid, and white wallpaper. A bed and a study desk. A shelf filled with manga. And among them, two of them were Shoujo manga lent to him by Haruka.

He looked at the back cover of the Shoujo manga and then looked at the window whose curtains were still drawn.

The time was seven-thirty.

Haruka would normally wake up at seven, an insanely early hour to Taito, but,

"....."

She had not been coming over for the past two weeks.

Rather, it might be more apt to say that she had disappeared.

The first three days were in a complete uproar. The police were involved and they had talked to the students, and of course, paid a visit to Taito.

You seemed to be on good terms with her.

Did you find anything strange with her recently?

Like being on bad terms with her family or something like that?

Perhaps, she just didn't want to come home?

Such meaningless questions were thrown at him over and over again.

After the monster-ravaged school was repaired and reopened, a particular topic had been circulating around the school. Haruka had disappeared. She had lapsed into despair after seeing Taito getting friendly with the mixed-blood girl who had transferred to their school.

But, this sort of rumor subsided in about a week.

A week had not even passed before people started worrying about their missing friend. These days, occasionally, a conversation would start with *"What in*

the world happened to Haruka?", which would lead to a series of dark thoughts about what tragedy could have befallen her and as a result, the conversation would trail off.

And two weeks without any clue to her disappearance easily passed.

Initially, Taito had thought, *"isn't it my fault that Haruka had disappeared"*, but the truth was different.

Since, for the sake of attaining power, Taito had told of his wish to the Mistress of Edeluca, and initially, Taito had thought that because of that, Haruka had become the price and was carried away, but in truth, that was not the case.

Because he was making so much noise, Gekkou had taken the trouble to make his way to Edeluca and asked the Mistress of Edeluca whether she had taken Haruka away, but apparently, the price that was paid by Taito was not Haruka.

Then, where on earth has Haruka disappeared to?, Taito fussed again. And he went screaming around, making noises here and there desperately searching for Haruka, to the point where even he was surprised at himself.

And even Himea followed him around.

And without any complaint, Gekkou cooperated as well.

And then, he employed some magic and powers which Taito could not understand to search for Haruka. Searching for her as best as he could. But yet, nothing came up and two weeks went by.

Haruka's mother wept everyday, until she was admitted to hospital.

Even though Haruka herself had said how nice it was to be ordinary, but before she even knew it, she had become the protagonist of an incident.

As such, Taito's days were filled with gloom.

His childhood friend had disappeared; perhaps, she was kidnapped? Or maybe, something worse than that had happened.

To not think about what that worse thing could be and continue smiling everyday was something impossible to ask of Taito.

No, not just Taito.

Even his classmates who had stopped talking about Haruka were somewhat filled with gloom daily.

Clearly, for the most of this year, it was just not possible for anyone to laugh this off as if nothing had happened.

Just by looking at that empty desk was enough to bring a tinge of sadness to anyone.

Next week, it seemed like there was a counseling session for the entire class.

And Taito wondered what that would be for.

Was it a counseling session to prepare them for the actuality that Haruka was no longer coming back?

That was what.

".....

Taito wondered.

There was no way he would accept that, he thought. *I will definitely find her. Wherever she is, I will definitely find her with my own hands and save her.*

Believing in that, he continued searching.

Even when nothing turned up, he kept on searching.

As time passed, his anxiety gradually increased, but even so, he never gave up and kept on searching.

But yet, not even a clue was found.

He could not even find a trace of her disappearance.

Despair.

Terrible despair.

Even while he was on the verge of crying, searching high and low desperately for her, he could not find anything at all.

Everyday, he was cursing and swearing.

Everyday, *damn, damn, damn, damn*, as if he was cursing at his own powerlessness, he cried out.

However.

"....."

However, his self-reproaching stopped yesterday.

From today onward, it would be different.

From this morning onward, it would be different.

"....."

He stood up. And from the pocket of the school uniform that he had not changed out of since yesterday after searching for Haruka until the middle of the night, he took out his cellphone.

And flipped open it.

A mail had come. A mail from Gekkou. Two hours ago . A mail that came at 5.30.

He opened that mail.

And read the contents.

The title went like this.

"You owe me another one."

And the body went like this.

"I've caught hold of Shigure Haruka's trail. Somehow, it seems like this is work for us. It was not the work of humans, but something else altogether. Even though I know not what they are yet, but I've caught hold of their location. Prepare yourself, we're heading on a rescue mission. Let us go teach those non-humans what will happen to them if they lay a hand on our student. The move out timing is 7.30. Until then, get prepared for a trip to another world."

That was what was written in that mail.

Of course, as to what kind of preparation he had to make for a trip to another world, he did not know, but at any rate, he would go to the place where the monster

which had kidnapped Haruka was. If so, he would need his stamina, he thought, and he shut his eyes for two hours to rest.

However, as expected, he could not sleep.

Without catching any sleep, the two hours passed.

"....."

Taito looked at the clock.

The time now was the appointed 7.30.

And at that moment, on the wall at the side of his bed, a rift opened.

A **<< Way >>**.

And from that rift, Gekkou's face poked out.

"Let's go trash. Have you made your preparations?"

He said, and Taito looked at his face,

"You're slow."

He replied.

But on hearing that, a smile floated on Gekkou's face.

"You should say your thanks first right?"

"Yeah, perhaps. But, for the notorious Mr Genius, isn't this a little too slow?"

"Ha. A genius had far-reaching plans that a small fry would not be able to understand."

"Wow."

"But well. Forget that for now and let's go. Let's go save Shigure Haruka."

Gekkou said.

And once again, his face went back into the student council room,

"Oh yeah. This time round, the one who had found Shigure Haruka was not me. It was Saitohimea. So say your thanks."

He said.

And Gekkou stepped away from the front of the portal . As he did that, Taito could see Himea on the other side.

Looking at him, with a somewhat weak smile for some reason, she waved.

On seeing that,

"....."

Taito smiled,

"Thank you, Himea."

He said.

And she smiled back,

"Uhn."

She said.

After acknowledging that, he stepped into the student council room. Another portal had already been opened on the wall of the student council room. A place that looked like grassland with a green grass and a blue sky above.

"..... is that another world?"

Gekkou nodded.

"It's full of monsters. But, fortunately, it's a place inhabitable by humans."

"Right, that's great."

"Yeah. Now, let's get going. Stop tarrying around, blockhead."

Gekkou said.

And from the portal that was connected to that grassland foreign world, Mirai's face appeared,

"It's awesome here ~, com'on com'on!"

She said.

And with the last.

With the last bit of hesitation,

"Alright, Taito..... let's go save Haruka-chan."

Himea said.

On hearing that, Taito gazed at her face and nodded.

And then,

"....."

Through that **<< Way >>**, they passed from this world into that world.

Afterword

Oh my, being busy as I am already, this time round, I actually have fourteen pages for my afterword, now, what should I do about it ~.

Speaking of that, an ancient person once said,

"Hey, number off!"

1!

2!

3!

4!

I've heard of people using such an incredible way of using up pages, but I won't be able to do such a terrible thing to you (even though I did).

Erm, anyway, this afterword will be a little long. Please give me your support, everyone.

But well, anyway, I shall say 'Hi' like always, and, early as it is, "Itsuka Tenma no Kuro Usagi 3" is out.

Well, since the start of the story, we have been having bi-monthly releases at one go, and as quickly as it seems, with this, we've come to an end for the bi-monthly releases for now.

Regarding the development about the story, it's faster and better to read it yourself, so I won't touch on it (no, isn't it better to touch on it? If I touch on it, I can use up the pages faster, which means it will be better to touch on it, but, whatever I say will end up becoming a spoiler, so I won't touch on it).

So, with this and that, and nothing else to write about, I shall end the afterword.

For the next ten pages, it will be filled with a bunch of advertisements.

So well, goodbye ~.

Editor-in-charge: "Heyy."

"Yes, what's wrong, pretty girl editor-in-charge K-san."

"There's no way we can fill the next pages with advertisements right?"

"Really?"

"Really ~. Everyone is looking forward to your afterword."

"Really?"

"Of course."

"But, the truth is, there is actually a good idea behind me putting in ads here."

"Huh? Good idea?"

"Yeah."

"What's that?"

"Well, isn't it that the ad pages are usually used for advertising the works of the other authors of Fujimi right ?"

"That's right."

"But this time round, let's do something different!"

"Yeah?"

"By the way, those who have read this Itsuten 3 should already know this, but this time, I kind of added the well-received and loved Cola to the story right?"

"You did."

"So why not you go to the Japanese Coca Cola corporation and ask them whether they would like to have their product advertised!"

"Uwaahh, isn't this turning into something rotten?"

"On top of that, by the way, I just discovered that Fanta is also a brand under the Coca Cola company!"

"No wait, why are you writing a rotten story in your afterword!"

"This is for the sake of buzzing through the pages!"

"No, I mean, yeah but."

"If you have some other way to fill up the pages, please, I'm at all ears!"

"Uhmm."

"See! See! Anyway, let's go to Coca Cola tomorrow, shall we? I'm ok with just one year's supply."

"What you're after is Cola!"

"Eh? What would you like then? Don't tell me it's, it's money? What a rotten fella!"

"As I was saying, what're you talking about, jeez ~"

So, with this conversation with my editor-in-charge, I'm done with four pages!

Another ten to go!

There are still enough pages left for me to die a total of seven times, you know!

Ermm, so, what should I do now? Is it time to talk about my recent situation?

If I write about my recent situation, it's like it's coming to an end and bidding you guys goodbye, but, erm, well, since there's nothing else to write, I'll go with that.

Eh ~.

I'm so busy with my manuscripts!

Crap, this won't do.

This won't convey to you how busy I really am. So, dear editor-in-charge, I shall try increasing the font size by three times.

Here I go, ok?

Alright, ready, get set ~.

I'm so busy with my manuscripts!

That's it!

That's it!

Somehow, it felt like an alarm going off. With that, that's all to my recent situation, so here ends the afterword.

And so, let's move on to the ads.

Editor-in-charge: Hey!

"Hi, rotten pretty girl K-san."

"Who are you calling rotten?"

"It's a mermaid setting right? Or raw food?"

"Jeez, what's this person rambling about?"

"But, this time round, it just comes out of me every now and then."

"Aren't you the one summoning it?"

"I did not."

"This doesn't end the afterword at all! And besides, it's shorter than usual!"

"But ~, this is the afterword of the 5th installation of the consecutive releases right? There's one more next month right? I've already nothing else to write ~."

"Even so, do your best! No matter how unfavorable the circumstances are, don't give up and continue running forward! Isn't that what makes you Kagami Takaya! Please remember that!"

"Hey, which Jump setting is that?"

"No idea though."

"Don't mess around with meeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

"Heh "

As I write up to here, it's just nice at the halfway point.

But, an overly long afterword may be tough to read. This is what I think. So, I shall seriously end it.

For only those who are interested, just follow on ok --- since the afterword is going to shift, but before that, let me make a few announcements.

Announcement 1.

In the same month as the release of this volume, the first volume of the comic version of another one of my series "Densetu Yuusha no Densetsu" is also being released.

I wrote this lengthy series Denyuuden with a lot of effort, for those who have yet to read it yet, perhaps you might want to take a dive into this lengthy series via the comics?

And also, Denyuuden's 4-Koma comic "Nantonaku Densetsu no Yuusha no Densetsu (The Legend of the Legendary Heroes Somehow)" are selling popularly. It's scheduled for an immediate reprint --- thank you!!

Announcement 2.

Next month, "Ochita Kuroi Yuusha no Densetsu (The Legend of the Fallen Dark Hero) 4" will be launched! As to what kind of content it will have, at the point of writing this afterword, I have yet to start on it, so I don't know! (Eeeeeehhhhhhhh, most of the editorial department exclaimed in surprise!)

Er, erm, I'll do my best. Thank you for your support.

But, this "Ochiten 4" should conclude Kagami Takaya's 6-consecutive month release.

Awesome. I did well! That's what In order to write this in my next month's afterword, I'll do my best.

Announcement 3.

The Dragon Magazine that will be selling at the same time as this book will contain the third short story of " Itsuten".

Thanks to everyone, from the results of the survey, we've received good feedback on the new series which has only just started. "Itsuten" is doing good!

Thank you everyone! I thank you all for filling up the survey again.

Anouncement 4.

Based on the schedule rushed out by my editor-in-charge, "Itsuten 4" will probably also be released sometime this year.

Well, it's either in June or July though, I think it's more or less decided to be around that time, I guess? I feel like saying I'm a little unsettled, so.

Please do support me, thanks!

Announcement 5.

No, this is the end.

All in all, thank you all. Thanks for reading. I'm really happy.

And well, I'll still continue to work hard, so please continue to support me!

Well well, see you.

Kagami Takaya

Afterword 2 - A survival race only for those who really want to read it

Ready?

You really want to go all the way to the fourteenth page?

I see. While I don't know how many people have survived up till now, I shall take count of how many people are really interested in what comes after here.

Right, number off!

1!

2!

3!

4!

Something shitty like this is going to continue, is that ok? Is that ok?

If you want to withdraw, now's the time, you know?

"....."

Alright, let's go!

Ok, let's talk about my recent situation again.

And it's about yesterday and today of my life, that's real recent huh.

Erm, yesterday, when I woke up, I yelled.

"I don't want to write my manuscript ~!"

But, even while I yelled, I sat down in front of my desk ; how admirable of me. And I gradually wrote the manuscript. I worked hard in writing it. By the way, the manuscript I was working on was for the short story in the Dragon Magazine. Even though it's supposed to be a short story, I've already used up sixty pages. Even though I was only told to have fifty pages, at the sixtieth page, I still couldn't find any part to drop. What should I do? What should I do?

As I said that, night fell and I was done.

A total of seventy six pages of manuscript.

Impossible. It was clearly an unforgivable number of pages. And I called my editor-in-charge. By the way, it was a non-working day and my editor-in-charge was taking a break and had went to the movies, but I ignored that and called her anyway, while weeping. *My manuscript has an incredible number of pages, what should I do?*

"EEeehhhh ~, how many pages?"

"Fifty."

"Eh? That won't be a problem right?"

"Fifty plus twenty-six."

"You should have said that earlierrrr! So, what now? Are there places that you can cut?"

"None!"

"What are you so proud of! Ugh, ah, jeez, tomorrow, I shall go prostrate myself in front of the chief. Since the next manuscript deadline will be pretty tight as well."

"Seriously?"

"Seriously. But please don't let it happen again!"

"I, I got it. Sorry."

After making trouble for everyone, I sent in my manuscript, and slept like a log for the day.

The next day, a galley was delivered. It was the galley of "Itsuten 3". As I was checking the galley, my editor-in-charge called in the afternoon.

"Kagami-san, I have good news!"

"Eh? What is it?"

"The pages were accepted miraculously! For the short story this time, we can do without any cutting!"

"Yayyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!"

By the way, previously, I've also have had manuscripts exceeding the limit, but during those times, due to lack of space, I was told to rewrite it, and because of those experiences, I couldn't help but shake in fear.

Ah, thank heavens. I can no longer raise my head in front of the editor-in-chief of Doramaga[10].

And then,

"What's remaining is the sub-title. And please hurry up with the galley. You have fourteen pages for the afterword. Please check the character introduction article. And please note the deadline for Ochiten's manuscript. And please rest so that you don't collapse "

I bet my editor-in-charge was talking to me as if I was with her in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

But, Veta will come to Earth soon, and I don't really have much time to train. In order not to let Earth be destroyed I shall do my best-ola , and so, I finished the galley, then I went to the convenience store and send it, following that, without abating a single breath, I finished thinking about the sub-title for the short story and send it via mail, checked through the character introduction article and replied, and now working on the afterword.

And finally, the afterword is coming to an end.

Yay! And tomorrow I shall start Ochiten's manuscript!

Wait, how the hell can I rest!

Well, even though I said that, I do take proper rest so please don't worry.

Since high school, I've formed a band with other authors, and we would practice like crazy at the guitar classroom, then fight zombie games with them, so I'll be fine. Probably!

That's how I spent the days.

So, after writing all that, I've cleared most of the fourteen-page space!

Those of you who have read till here, thank you.

Now now, it's really time to part.

For those who also read Denyuuden, I'll see you next month!

For those who only read Itsuten, also go read Denyuuden! (LOL)

Oh well, till around June or July.

Oh yeah, since there's a "Itsuten" short story in May's Doramaga, the next time will be then right.

Well well, see you ~

Kagami Takaya

Kagami Takaya official homepage: http://www.kagamitakaya.com/

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **School Road:** This is just a lazy translation of 通, which to be precise, means a road which is used for commuting to and from school. Since there's no one word equivalent translation, we'll use 'School Road', and every time 'school road' is used, it refers to this kind of road.

2. ↑ **Observer:** Please note that, when I'm using the word observe for Haruka, it really means 'keeping an eye on (Taito)', 'keeping (Taito) under survelliance', but since trying to be precise here breaks the sentence flow, I'll just stick to the word ' observe'.

3. ↑ **Giant Bat Event:** Apparently, this is probably from a short story in the Seitokaishitsu series which I've not yet read.

4. ↑ **Short time no see:** Yes, that's what Mirai said. It's a word play on "Long time no see (sashiburi)", which she changed to "Short time no see (sakkiburi)"

5. ↑ **Morning no see:** So, Taito returned in the same manner --> "Morning no see (asaburi)". Well to

precise, it's actually "Not seen you since morning".

6. ↑ **Atashi ni wa pikkuru ga oniaida tte!:** Sorry, I totally don't get the joke, so I translated literally as it was.

7. ↑ **Ma(魔):** This may refer to another group of Tenma or something similar, so I'm not translating it to what could have been 'demons / demonic beings'.

8. ↑ **Tenshi:** Even though this servant denied having anything to do with the other Tenshi, Tenshi can still be an appropriate way to call the servant in Gekkou's POV (point-of-view), since it can still be taken to mean 'SERVANT(SHI) of the TENma'.

9. ↑ **Chuupetto:** Thanks to Doraneko for providing the article on this. Seriously, even though I've eaten this as a kid, I don't know what it's called in English as well. It's actually made up of colored, sweetened syrup put into elongated soft plastic tubes and frozen. See pics here.

10. ↑ **Doramaga:** Short for Dragon Magazine.